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# **Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment**

**Final edit: 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

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# Acknowledgements

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- (1) This Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has been prepared by a project team, led by De Montfort University in Leicester, for the county and district councils in Somerset.
- (2) The research team, as part of its methodology, trained members of the Gypsy and Traveller community in Somerset to undertake especially tailored surveys for the project. 157 surveys were achieved throughout the period of research and information from these were used in combination with other desk-top research and information provided by the client councils to inform the calculation of pitches required between 2010 and 2015 (and an estimate up to 2020). A transit pitch requirement and a Showmen's yard requirement were also calculated.

## Pitch requirement across Somerset

The report outlines a need for 131 additional pitches across the study area between 2010 and 2015. The detail and stratification by district is provided in chapter six.

An estimated 64 further pitches will be required by 2020.

Transit provision is needed for around 100 caravans by 2015 across Somerset. The detail and stratification by district is provided in chapter six.

At least 4 Showmen's yards needed by 2015<sup>1</sup>

## Summary of pitch requirement by district

	<b>Pitches 2010 - 2015</b>	<b>Pitches 2015 - 2020</b>	<b>Transit Pitches</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	69	24	80
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	24	10	5
<b>South Somerset</b>	10	8	10
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	25	19	5
<b>West Somerset</b>	2	3	0
	<b>131<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>1</sup> Only one Showmen's survey was achieved in the sample, so this need relates solely to the identified need for the one family surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> Due to rounding of figures during calculation (see table 6.2 in the main report) there is a difference of 1 between rows and columns in the main set of figures for 2010 – 2015 between the study area as a whole and the total of all districts. The collective calculation for the county results in a figure of 131; but when distributed by district the total is 130.

- (3) The study provided some qualitative and quantitative data on issues other than pure accommodation need. When examining current accommodation, the researchers found responses from residents on council-run sites which were of concern in relation to fire safety, and in some cases there were issues with repairs and maintenance.
- (4) In chapter five there are findings on the preferred type and location of sites with many respondents suggesting smaller family sites within Somerset, and others asking for traditional stopping places to be opened up again for transit provision. There are detailed suggestions of places where there should be sites, and these are outlined in chapter five; but many respondents just wanted a settled and secure place somewhere in Somerset.
- (5) In work and education, the study found that traditional patterns and types of work are changing with modern technology. The ability to access employment, without settled accommodation, is reduced. Education requirements, such as basic literacy, but also computer skills as well as some technical training, are detailed in the report.
- (6) For health, there are a number of Gypsies and Travellers who state they are in poor health and that this is exacerbated by their current accommodation, or lack thereof. Access to doctors seemed to show that most Travellers were registered with a GP, but fewer were registered with dentists.
- (7) In accessing and using other services there were perceptions that Gypsies and Travellers were discriminated against in service provision in some cases. There were also quite strong views that police were negative about Gypsies and Travellers and that the media portrayal of issues was also quite negative.
- (8) Three focus groups were held with (1) Young People (2) New Travellers and (3) Women about health. These groups are reported to establish the types of public service responses that are needed, in chapter nine to eleven. The full details of focus group conversations are included in the appendices to provide rich qualitative data on some issues.
- (9) Ideas for future site delivery are discussed in chapter twelve, but it must be noted that Mendip has led the way in an innovative approach to develop a community land trust scheme and that in the current political and economic climate, this model may be a good way of empowering the community to provide sites for themselves where that is appropriate.
- (10) A series of recommendations, summarising messages drawn out of the data throughout the report, are provided in the final chapter – thirteen. These include a pitch requirement for new sites, but also look at issues such as management, fire safety, community representation and opening up traditional stopping places.

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 De Montfort University and partners were commissioned by the councils (Somerset County, Mendip District, Sedgemoor District, South Somerset District, Taunton Deane District and West Somerset District) to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) starting in October 2009 and completing in October 2010. The research process needed to fit the standards set out for accommodation assessments in the Government guidance, but there were further areas of enquiry that were important to the council on areas of health and education in particular.

1.1.2 Under the previous planning regime, the findings of the GTAA would have fed into a Regional Spatial Strategy and authorities would have been required to set out how they would meet the need for regionally agreed targets. These targets have now been abolished and it is the responsibility of each local authority to understand the need in their own area and to meet that need accordingly. It is therefore important to have current data in a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment to help inform this local debate.

1.1.3 This is a technical document which provides independent evidence of the accommodation need for Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset. Councils are required to undertake regular assessments of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation need under a duty placed on them by the Housing Act 2004 (Section 225). An assessment of Gypsy and Traveller needs is also identified as a requirement of Strategic Housing Market Assessments which the Government requires Councils to produce. The Somerset Strategic Housing Market Assessment approved in 2009 did not address the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the expectation that this specific Accommodation Assessment would be produced and provide the information on these needs. A GTAA was last reported in early 2006. This GTAA in late 2010 provides an up-to-date picture of accommodation needs up to 2015. The data can be used to underpin the Core Strategy for the area.

## **1.2 Framework of the report**

1.2.1 This report sets out the findings of the research process according to a number of key areas of enquiry. Firstly, we set out the methodology which underpins the research process in chapter two of the report, and then the policy context for making decisions on Gypsy and Traveller site provision (which has been subject to much change with the new Coalition Government coming to power earlier in 2010) is provided in chapter three.

1.2.2 Chapter four presents the first set of substantive findings from the GTAA survey and it looks at a profile of the population in the county, issues relating to current accommodation, management of sites, as well as a debate on travel and transit needs. This leads into chapter five which sets out what Gypsies and

Travellers in Somerset would like the future provision of sites to look like – it provides information on site type, location, essential and desirable features of a site.

1.2.3 The calculation of pitch requirements is found in chapter six of the report. This is important information for the client councils, but should not be read in isolation of the vital qualitative detail on accommodation and other needs that are detailed in the remainder of the report. A ‘pitch’ is not simple to define; common assumptions in GTAAs across the country, and evaluative work by Niner (2009), suggest that a pitch houses 1.6 or 1.7 caravans. However caravan sizes vary, as to pitch sizes and perhaps the most appropriate method of understanding what constitutes a ‘pitch’ is to equate it to a household. A pitch does not equate to a particular size patch of hard-standing either, however for future design and delivery of new sites, there is Government guidance on good practice in this area

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/designinggypsysites.pdf>.

1.2.4 In chapter seven there are findings on work, education and training and in chapter eight we discuss findings on health, services and safety. These two chapters provide a richer picture of the needs of the community and the types of support that can help improve services, or perceptions of services.

1.2.5 Chapters nine, ten and eleven examine the debate of the three focus groups which provide an insight into the views of young people, New Travellers and finally women and health. Suggestions for public service responses are outlined in the chapters, but the full detail, including the views of the travelling communities in their own words, are included in the appendices.

1.2.6 Ideas for future site delivery are discussed in chapter twelve, particularly looking at the idea for Community Land Trusts which is emerging in Mendip (and this is also discussed in chapter ten). Key conclusions and recommendations are outlined briefly in the final chapter, but these are made throughout the report during discussion of the findings.

### **1.3 Emerging policy context for site delivery**

1.3.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy framework and targets have been abolished by the Coalition Government. However, it is very important for councils to understand that the need for new sites has not disappeared. Whilst the regional planning framework may have changed, the data demonstrating a need for additional pitches in the area is still in evidence.

1.3.2 The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, has made this very clear in a debate in the Housing of Commons (15<sup>th</sup> July, 2010)

Hansard, House of Commons Debate, 15 July 2010: Column 1079

#### **Travellers (Local Authority Powers)**

**10. Caroline Dinenage (Gosport) (Con):** Whether he plans to bring forward proposals to facilitate local authorities in moving Travellers on from private and public property. [8509]



**15. Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con):** If he will take steps to accelerate the process for local authorities to gain possession of public land upon which there are unauthorised Traveller encampments. [8514]

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr Eric Pickles):** The Government will ensure that, where local authorities have made appropriate provision for authorised sites in their area, reflecting genuine local need and historic demand, they will have stronger enforcement powers to deal with unauthorised encampments. We are reviewing how this can be achieved.

[Emphasis added]

1.3.3 The intention of the Secretary of State is unequivocal on the point of providing appropriate provision. The revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy framework is not a revocation of responsibility on the part of the statutory agencies to provide accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. Planning for sites, where a need has been shown, should go ahead. Those councils without appropriate provision will not be able to use the full range of options for moving on unauthorised encampments that will be open to their neighbouring councils who have provided sites to meet identified need. However, the Government announcement of their intention to abolish Planning Circular 1/06 may also have an effect on the ability of councils to grant planning permission for small private sites in the Green Belt.

1.3.4 The key message coming out of this shifting context is that, although targets have been abolished at a regional level, the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation has not gone away. Strategic planning policy is still focused on evidence-based need. The new Government understands that and has suggested that local need should be met locally by councils, rather than regionally through targets. The findings from this GTAA should enable the councils in Somerset to do understand local need and to start to devise ways to meet it.

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## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

2.1.1 The methodology for conducting the survey was based upon the use of Gypsy and Traveller community interviewers which helped gain access to households and provided a climate of trust to gain answers. This was a key part of our methodology and one we found successful in the main part in this study and in previous GTAA studies.

### **2.2 Secondary Research**

2.2.1 There was a 'desk-top' phase of the study which enabled the project team to examine a range of documents to familiarise themselves with the context for the area. During this stage contacts were made with key stakeholders, such as with Police, Travellers Education Service and community representative organisations. All of this helped to inform the population estimate, questions for the survey form, contacts for the survey team, and a better idea of key issues for Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset.

### **2.3 Gypsy and Traveller Population – survey sample**

2.3.1 The DCLG Gypsy/Traveller Count for January 2009 showed the total number of caravans for the area as 468 (Mendip - 169, Sedgemoor - 75, South Somerset - 58, Taunton Deane - 148, and West Somerset - 18). The consultation with key stakeholders, particularly the Romany Gypsy Advisory Group South West, and the Robert Barton Trust provided more detailed and local information. To ascertain the sample size at the very start though, we based calculations on secondary research and similar studies to estimate that the total Gypsy and Traveller population in this Somerset sub-area is approximately 600, including approximately 140 housed Travellers and approximately ten Showmen's yards, as shown below.

**Figure 2.3.1**

<b>Possible Number of Gypsy and Traveller Households<sup>3</sup></b>	
Socially Rented Authorised Sites	126
Private Authorised Sites	217
Unauthorised Sites on Gypsy owned land	48
Unauthorised Sites not on Gypsy owned land	77
Show People	10 <sup>4</sup>
Housed Travellers	140 <sup>5</sup>
All	618

2.3.2 The estimated total population was based in part on Government count data from January 2009, however during the course of the research it was noted that some pitches on several of the council sites were occupied by non Gypsy Travellers who were previously homeless. A small number of respondents identified themselves as non Gypsy-Travellers; the survey team focused its efforts on speaking to people who identified themselves as members of the travelling communities. Also in Taunton Deane, there is one particular site which local community members suggest has a number of non Gypsy-Travellers occupying pitches. In the pitch requirement calculations in section six of the report an assumption has been made that the council is not including accommodation which is being used by non Gypsy-Travellers in the bi-annual count submission to Government. However, if pitches occupied by non Gypsy-Travellers are being counted in official figures as supply being available to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers, when they are not, then this may have an effect on the number of pitches needed for current and future accommodation needs.

**It is recommended that district councils liaise further with the county council to ensure that only caravans used for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation are included in caravan counts in the future and that allocations policies and procedures for council owned sites are adhered to.**

2.3.3 The project team had an ambitious aim to survey just over 40% of the total population with a sample of 250. However, this was not achieved during the primary research stage. There were a number of reasons for the target not being achieved,

<sup>3</sup> Based on caravan count figures, DCLG January 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Based on a telephone conversation estimate from Henry Chipperfield, a member of the Showmen's Guild who lives in the South Somerset district area. However during the research process there were no more contacts given by the Guild or Mr Chipperfield, in a discussion with the Western Section of the Guild at the very end of the project the estimated number of Showmen's Yards was given as two – Chipperfield's and one other recent development. Perhaps the number given to the project team was an overestimation, or counted unofficial yards or temporary accommodation.

<sup>5</sup> This is an estimated target. A range of estimates for numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in housing exist, from 25% to say one estimate from Niner that up to 50% of Gypsy and Traveller households live in bricks and mortar. GTAA's in other areas take a range of views on the sample here, one approach in the West of England estimated 28- 30% of Gypsies and Travellers were in housing with slightly more in Bristol. In this study area an estimate of housed Gypsies and Travellers of 30% the total estimate population seemed reasonable.

adverse weather conditions at the beginning of 2010 delayed the start of the survey process for many community interviewers and some of the trained interviewers had personal issues which prevented progress at times. However, there were other substantial issues that the project team had to deal with, including:

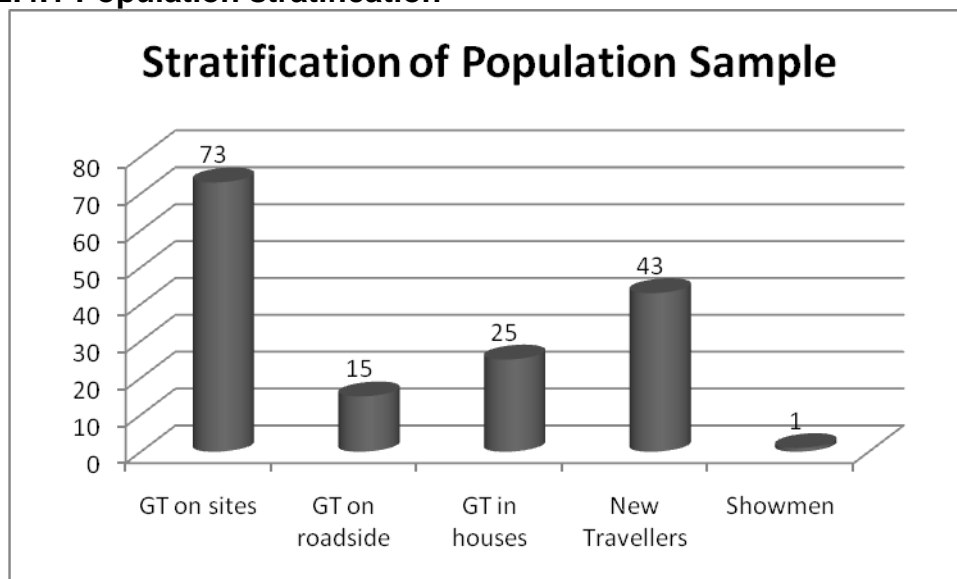
- (1) Change of Government in May and immediate revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies and targets for pitches as well as subsequent announcement that planning circular 1/06 would be abolished. This had a real affect on potential respondents who felt disillusioned at the speed with which the new Government changed the political and regulatory context for site provision and there was a feeling that there was little point engaging with a GTAA when the targets had been dropped regionally. Groups which seemed to particularly disengage included Irish Travellers on sites (for example none would take part on a council site in Sedgemoor) as well as Gypsies and Travellers in housing.
- (2) Economy and public sector cuts in budgets had a huge impact – this was particularly manifest in the closure of the Robert Barton Trust (RBT) in the summer. The RBT had been a very important part of the research team and had helped with the administration for New Traveller community interviewers. The practical impact was challenging, but this also had an effect on how Travellers viewed the project and again there was seen to be little point engaging once the RSS targets had been abolished.

2.3.4 As is made clear in the following policy context chapter of this report, GTAA figures are still important in the process of new site delivery, but the overshadowing political and economic framework had a severe impact on the willingness of respondents to be involved.

## **2.4 Stratification of Sample**

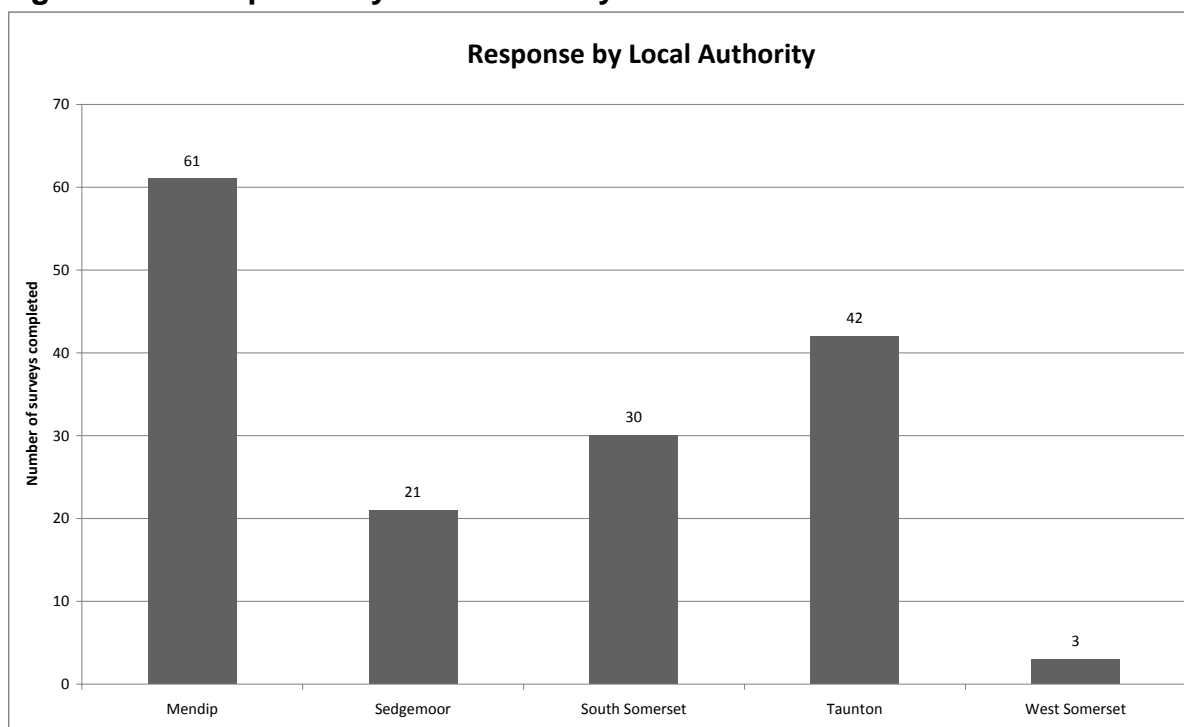
2.4.1 By the end of the research period, 157 Gypsies and Travellers were surveyed across Somerset. This represents just over a quarter of the original total population estimate (25%). The sample was stratified accordingly:

**Figure 2.4.1 Population stratification**



2.4.2 Gypsies and Travellers on sites represented 46% of the total sample, those on the roadside – 10%, in houses – 16%. New Travellers accounted for 27% of those surveyed and just one Showman interview was achieved representing less than 1% of the survey population.

**Figure 2.4.2 Response by local authority**



2.4.3 When looking at the distribution of the sample across districts, we can see from Figure 2.3 that Mendip had the most surveys undertaken (61) representing 39% of the sample, Sedgemoor (21 surveys) accounted for 13%, South Somerset had 19%

of the sample surveys (30 surveys), Taunton (42 surveys) represented 27%, and West Somerset (3 surveys) accounted for 2%.

The distribution of the 157 surveys undertaken is stratified in more detail in the tables below.

**Figure 2.4.3 Gypsies and Irish Travellers on sites**

		Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	Total
Council sites	Gypsy	12	7	4	6	3	32
	Irish Traveller	0	0	7	0	0	7
Private with planning permission	Gypsy	4	6	1	9	0	20
	Irish Traveller	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private without planning permission	Gypsy	3	3	1	7	0	14
	Irish Traveller	0	0	0	0	0	0
		19 (26%)	16 (22%)	13 (18%)	22 (30%)	3 (4%)	<b>73 (100%)</b>

2.4.4 The original target for surveys on sites was to achieve 128 interviews so the 73 surveys actually completed represent 57%. For surveys on council sites, there were 39 completed out of 41 aimed for. The areas of the sample which were harder to achieve were on private sites. Particularly hard to reach areas of this part of the sample were the large authorised private site in Taunton Deane where repeated visits were made but very few residents wished to take part in the survey, so 9 out of the target of 38 were achieved (23%) for authorised private sites in Taunton; however 7 out of 9 surveys on unauthorised sites in the same district (78%) were obtained. Across the whole study area 14 surveys on unauthorised private sites were achieved out of a target of 22 (64%). Irish Travellers were a part of the sample who were hard to reach in the survey process, on one council site Irish Travellers said they did not want to take part in the survey, in spite of repeated visits to the site to explain the benefits of getting involved. 7 out of a target of 10 Irish Travellers were surveyed on council sites. At the outset of the project in meetings with the client councils and upon examination of existing information there was no target to achieve for Irish Travellers on private sites without planning permission, but there was a target of four surveys on private sites with planning permission, but unfortunately these were not achieved.

**Figure 2.4.4 Gypsies and Irish Travellers on the roadside/unauthorised encampments**

		Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
On roadside/unauthorised encampment	Gypsy	1	0	2	0	0	3
	Irish Traveller	0	0	12	0	0	12
		1 (7%)	0	14 (93%)	0	0	15 (100%)

2.4.5 The original target for surveys on the roadside/unauthorised encampments was 16, so 94% of the target was achieved in this part of the sample. One point to note is that 3 out of target of 8 surveys were completed for people identifying as 'Gypsy' and 12 out of a target of 8 surveys were completed for those identifying as 'Irish Traveller'. Indeed, of the 15 surveys completed above, 12 were Irish Traveller representing 80% of this part of the sample. Where Irish Travellers were under-represented in the sites part of the survey (for a range of reasons, including not wanting to take part) they are over-represented in the roadside/unauthorised encampment part of the sample.

**Figure 2.4.5 Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Showmen and New Travellers in Houses**

		Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
In house, flat or bungalow (bricks and mortar)	Gypsy	4	4	1	11	0	20
	Irish Traveller	0	0	0	0	0	0
	New Traveller	4	1	0	0	0	5
	Showmen	0	0	0	0	0	0
		8 (32%)	5 (20%)	1 (4%)	11 (44%)	0	25 (100%)

2.4.6 The aim here was to survey 50 Gypsy-Travellers in houses, bungalows or flats (bricks and mortar accommodation). 25 surveys were achieved representing 50% of the sample population for those in housing. All of those surveyed were either Gypsy or New Traveller. The aim had been to interview 2 Irish Travellers (1 in Sedgemoor and 1 in South Somerset) and 1 Showman in a house in Mendip district – none of these three surveys could be achieved. In West Somerset there was an aim to achieve 2 surveys but none could be completed and in South Somerset 1 survey was achieved from a target of ten. However in Taunton Dean 11 out of 13 surveys were obtained and then in Mendip and Sedgemoor the final number of surveys represented approximately 50% of the original target.

**Figure 2.4.6 New Travellers on sites, stopping places and unauthorised encampments**

		Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
New Travellers on sites and stopping places	Council site	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Private with planning permission	5	0	0	9	0	14
	Private without planning permission	5	0	1	0	0	6
	'Unauthorised encampment' or other traditional stopping site	23	0	0	0	0	23
		33 (77%)	0	1 (2%)	9 (21%)	0	43 (100%)

2.4.7 An original target of 52 surveys was set for New Travellers in Somerset on sites and other stopping places and encampments. 43 surveys were achieved representing 83% of the target. The majority of these were in Mendip with the second highest representation in Taunton Deane. In the original target there were no New Travellers identified for the survey sample in West Somerset, but there were 4 in Sedgemoor and none could be achieved and 5 in South Somerset with 1 achieved in the final survey.

**Figure 2.4.7 Showmen**

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
Showmen on Yards – private and authorised	0	0	1	0	0	1

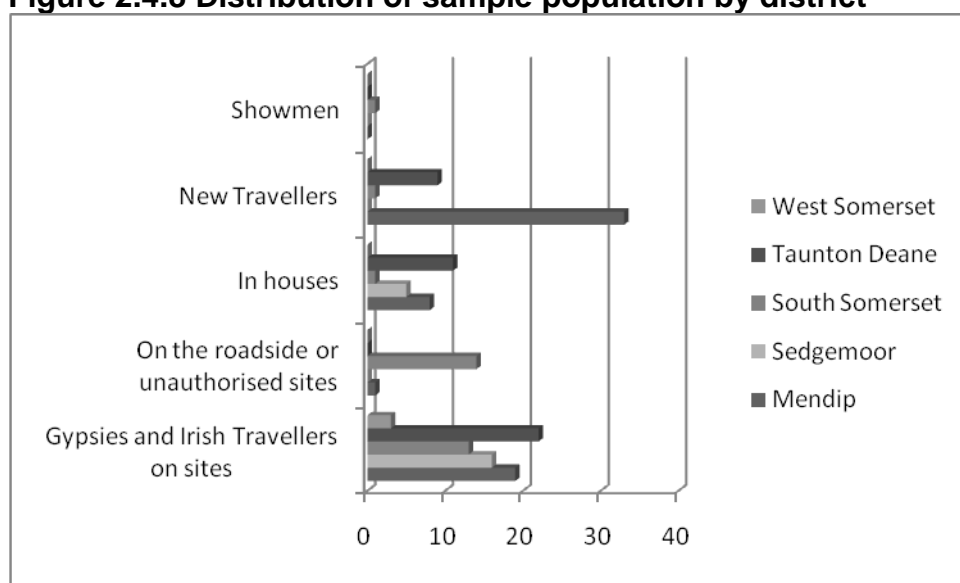
2.4.8 Four (4) Showmen on yards were the target for the survey (1 in Mendip, 2 in Sedgemoor and 1 in South Somerset). Only one survey was achieved, in South Somerset. During the desk-top stage of the research and the initial scoping stage with councils and other agencies, questions were asked of the Showmen's Guild and of one particular Showman contact in the area; a broad estimate of ten yards was given to the research team. During the process of trying to achieve more Showmen's surveys and in a data gathering exercise at the end of the research period to obtain snapshot information, a figure of five yards in total across Somerset was finally agreed with the councils from their planning data. This means that although only one survey has been achieved and that assumptions cannot be grossed up to a total estimated population<sup>6</sup> it still represents 20% of the total population.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed the pitch requirement for Showmen relates only to the one survey achieved as the needs from this one yard may not be typical or indicative of needs on other yards.



In the original proposal by the research team which was discussed with the client at the beginning of the project, the estimated total Gypsy-Traveller population for Somerset was 618. The total sample of 157 represents 25% of the estimated total population from the beginning of the survey and is a good basis from which to understand more generally the accommodation, health, education and other support needs of the community. This final sample size falls within general norms of robustness and validity in social research allowing a 90% confidence level and a 5.6% margin of error. It should also be noted that for the pitch requirement calculation the results of the surveys are just one part. The methodology and notes for the pitch requirement is detailed in that section of the report (section six and appendix A) and it uses a number of different pieces of data including numbers from Traveller Education Services data, planning information and caravan count data. Finally, during the process of the research and the collection of data from agencies including the Traveller Education Service, councils and the bi-annual count data from 2010, the revised total Gypsy-Traveller population was 497 – which means that 157 surveys represents 31% of all Gypsy and Traveller communities in Somerset.

**Figure 2.4.8 Distribution of sample population by district**

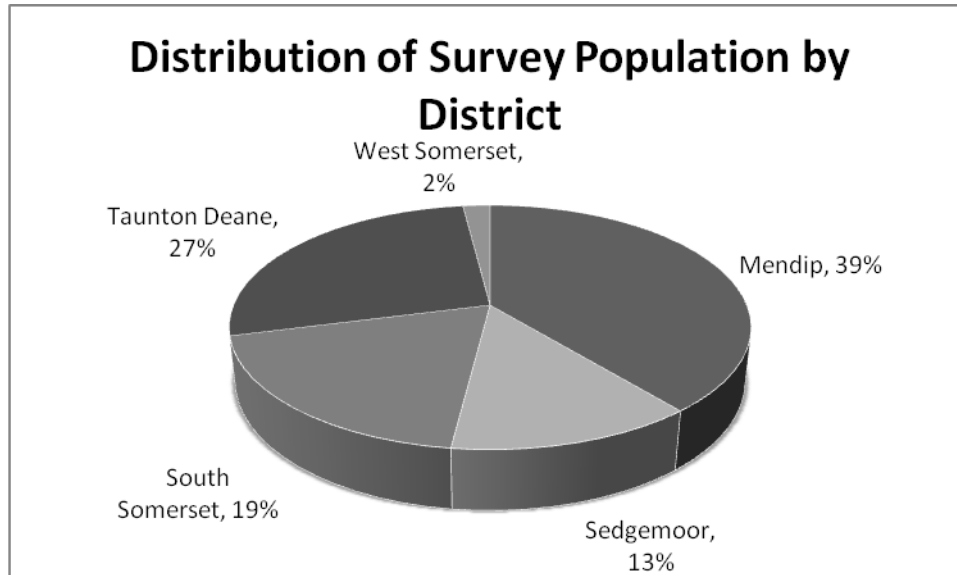


2.4.9 The table below at figure 2.4.9 shows this data along with % sample population distributed by district and then the pie chart at figure 2.4.10 graphically demonstrates the proportion of the sample population surveyed according to district.

**Figure 2.4.9 Sample population by district**

Council	Gypsies & Irish Travellers on sites	Gypsies & Irish Travellers on roadside or unauthorised encampments	Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Travellers in Housing	New Travellers on stopping places and encampments	Showmen	Total
Mendip	19	1	8	33	0	61 (39%)
Sedgemoor	16	0	5	0	0	21 (13%)
South Somerset	13	14	1	1	1	30 (19%)
Taunton Deane	22	0	11	9	0	42 (27%)
West Somerset	3	0	0	0	0	3 (2%)
	73 (46%)	15 (10%)	25 (16%)	43 (27%)	1 (under 1%)	<b>157</b> <b>(100%)</b>

**Figure 2.4.10 Proportion of Survey Population by district**



## 2.5 The Surveys

2.5.1 The project team used a questionnaire style which had been tried and tested in a number of previous Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessments, such as

Cambridgeshire, East Kent, the West of England<sup>7</sup> and Dorset. The questionnaire was originally designed by Margaret Greenfields, in consultation with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community and fully conformed with DCLG guidance. It was refined further, in order to be appropriate for the Somerset area, through consultation with key stakeholders, Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople and the client local authorities during a series of meetings early on in the project and a number of drafts circulated widely for comment. The questionnaire was designed to allow an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes.

2.5.2 The questionnaires for the survey were designed to focus on particular groups:

- Gypsies and Irish Travellers on sites (yellow form)
- Gypsies and Irish Travellers on the roadside/unauthorised encampments (lilac form)
- Gypsies and Irish Travellers in houses (blue form)
- New Travellers (green form)
- Showmen (white form)

2.5.3 Surveys were colour coded for ease of use for the team of community interviewers and for simplicity of reference for the project team analysing the responses. The questions for the survey follow the guidelines set out by DCLG for GTAAAs and included the elements stated by the Client councils in the Brief. The surveys were also considered in detail by the client team commissioning the project, including the Gypsy and New Traveller representatives on the team. Surveys were piloted on a small number of respondents in the first instance, and some small and final amendments were made.

2.5.4 The main focus of the methodology of the project team was to utilise the local knowledge and expertise of Gypsies and Travellers living in Somerset. This has two particularly positive outcomes:

- (1) Local Gypsies and Travellers know the area, are able to quickly respond to new sites as they occur and clearly have a cultural understanding to be able to ask questions in a sensitive way.
- (2) By training community members up, and through their experience on the project, some Travellers have talked about renewed confidence and empowerment by being involved in the process.

2.5.5 All recruited interviewers received a full day's training in interview methods comprising the following elements:

- Discussion on project and interviewers' role in refining the questionnaires. Awareness of information which will be given to participants (leaflets, etc.);
- Payment and quality control elements;

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<sup>7</sup> North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset unitary authority areas.

- How to 'sell' an interview to someone who might be dubious about participating (utilising existing skills interviewers have – although haven't always self-identified);
- 'Skills audit' exercise on verbal skills; identifying who has worked on market or door to door sales, situations when people are required to talk to strangers and convince them of something;
- Discussions on importance of valuing what they are doing in participating in the study and being able to say 'this is what we want to happen' but being aware it might be a slow process until delivery of sites and informing respondents of that fact openly;
- Dealing with verbal challenges and knowing when/how to refer people back to the academic team for more information;
- Open and closed questions and probes;
- How to rephrase a question slightly if someone doesn't understand;
- Familiarisation with the questionnaires – discussing questions and how they might be perceived by respondents and how to deal with common queries, for example, 'why do you want to know about my health?';
- Developing contacts, for example, probing for family members' details etc.
- Explaining about focus groups and the launch event (sharing ownership of the project with respondents); and
- Interview exercise.

## **2.6 Focus Groups**

2.6.1 Focus groups took place during the survey study period and they served to inform the analysis of the survey data, and further explored issues such as housing related support and innovative ideas on commons sharing and community empowerment. Three focus groups were arranged: (1) Women and health – this explored additional support needs for Gypsies and Travellers on sites, but also other issues such as mental health needs for Gypsies and Travellers in housing who may feel marginalised from their community (2) Young people and education – results from this focus group embraced a wide range of subject areas including education (3) New Travellers, and ideas on community empowerment and commons sharing plus other innovative frameworks and ideas. The focus groups were led by Sarah Cemlyn and Margaret Greenfields, the debates were transcribed by a professional service and the results analysed by Cemlyn and Greenfields.

## **2.7 Data Checking and Discussion with Agencies**

2.7.1 At the beginning of the research period, and then again at the end, a questionnaire was sent, via the clients' project manager, to the five district councils to check data and to ask for updated information on unauthorised encampment data, waiting lists for sites, vacancies on sites and recent planning permission information.

2.7.2 There were also points during the research process where people from a number of agencies were contacted, including district councils, the county council,

housing association, equalities monitoring, health, Traveller education, Gypsy and Traveller representative organisations, Children's Society, Police and local councillor.

2.7.3 This ongoing process of speaking to a range of individuals and agencies, alongside the desk-top research, surveys and focus groups helped to provide a context and fact-checking framework for the findings.

### **3. CONTEXT AND POLICY BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1 The primary aim of this chapter in the report is to provide an overview of the changing policy making and delivery frameworks for addressing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers<sup>8</sup>. Both are subject to ongoing changes that will result in a fundamentally different approach. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that undertaking a GTAA is a legal requirement under the Housing Act 2004, and the GTAA report is a technical document which underpins the core strategy and other evidence-based planning strategies for the County.

3.1.2 Links are made with policies and issues in Somerset. However, the primary function is to scope the significant changes that are taking place on overall policy making and delivery.

3.1.3 The next section sets out the changing policy making frameworks at national and regional levels. This is followed by a focus on sub-regions and local authorities. The fourth section considers delivery and implementation.

#### **3.2 Policy Making at National and Regional Levels**

3.2.1 At a national level (and indeed at other geographical scales), it is important to distinguish between policy and policy making. The former refers to substantive statements, while the latter refers to the process of making decisions.

#### **3.3 Communities and Local Government Structural Reform Plan**

3.3.1 In relation to national strategies, each Government department now sets out its policies through a structural reform plan, which is updated monthly<sup>9</sup>. The Communities and Local Government Structural Reform Plan and monthly updates make no reference to meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. This can be contrasted with the previous Government's inclusion of three paragraphs in the CLG annual report in 2009<sup>10</sup> that centred on facilitating the provision of new pitches and tackling unauthorised encampments. There is, however, indirect relevance through the over-arching theme of 'making localism and big society part of everyday life':-

- 'By putting local communities in charge of planning' through, for example, the abolition of regional spatial strategies (RSSs) – see below in relation to regional targets for sites and pitches.

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<sup>8</sup> The focus in this chapter of the report is on the policy making process and delivery of sites, plots and pitches – these terms are used interchangeably.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.number10.gov.uk/other/2010/07/structural-reform-plans-53023>.

<sup>10</sup> Communities and Local Government (2009): Annual Report 2009: London, CLG – see <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/annualreport09>. The annual report set out the Government's policies in considerable detail.

- 'By decentralising powers as far as is possible' by, for instance, removing the regional tier of Government. Local authorities will have relatively greater autonomy in determining priorities such as the importance of meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
- 'By meeting people's housing aspirations' by, for example, providing councils with incentives for facilitating new development. This can be interpreted as meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

3.3.2 In late August 2010, the Government issued a statement on 'time for a fair deal for the travelling and settled community'<sup>11</sup>. This begins to shed light on specific policy directions. Four policy areas are highlighted:-

- Stronger tenancy rights on authorised council sites.
- Incentives to build authorised sites through the proposed 'new homes bonus' system (see below).
- Reduction in Government guidance through the repeal of a number of planning circulars.
- Stronger powers for councils to tackle unauthorised developments.

3.3.3 Further details on these policy areas are scheduled to be published in late 2010 / early 2011 as part of the localism and the big society agendas. These concepts represent both challenges and opportunities for addressing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. The emphasis on decentralising decisions to localities could perpetuate and increase 'nimbyism'<sup>12</sup> re provision of pitches, as well as marginalising this as a local priority. On the other hand, it could potentially lead to innovative solutions where addressing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers is regarded as an important issue. From a big society perspective, there is clearly an opportunity to utilise this agenda around community cohesion, the mainstreaming of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and the development and delivery of specific projects.

3.3.4 Commentators have, nevertheless, generally regarded the national policy developments as having negative consequences for meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers<sup>13</sup>. The abolition of regional targets and the proposed removal of a number of planning circulars (see below) are seen as detrimental to the development of new sites.

3.3.5 More generally, a number of organisations have highlighted the implications of national policy changes and public expenditure cuts on groups such as Gypsies and Travellers. The Equality and Human Rights Commission, for instance, has emphasised to the Government that it must meet its legal obligations on the

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1700758>

<sup>12</sup> Nimbyism – not in my back yard.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jun/04/equality-liberal-conservative-coalition>.

implications of the spending review on vulnerable groups<sup>14</sup>. The same principle applies to local authorities and other public bodies.

### **3.4 Homes and Communities Agency**

3.4.1 The Homes and Communities Agency is responsible for funding allocations for new and refurbished Gypsy and Traveller sites. Councils and the Homes & Communities Agency develop investment policies and detailed agreements through a process of Local Investment Planning.

3.4.2 As a result of the Coalition Government's review of public expenditure for 2010 / 2011, the Homes and Communities Agency announced in May 2010 that the bidding round for site funding would not proceed with the loss of £32m of investment. It is important to note that there was a major underspend of site grant in 2009/10<sup>15</sup>. Of the £32m allocated in 2009/10, only £1.5m was spent and £15.5m was transferred to the national affordable homes programme. The remaining £15m has been transferred to 2010/11. It remains uncertain whether there will be a separate funding stream for Gypsies and Travellers from 2011.

### **3.5 National Policy Making**

3.5.1 There is continuity and change between the previous Labour administration and the current Coalition Government. Both have emphasised a switch from detailed command and control approach. But the latter are in the process of dismantling the regional tier of policy making that was only established in the late 1990s.

3.5.2 The localism and decentralisation themes have been highlighted above. Part of the emphasis is and will continue to be a 'bonfire of national targets' that has previously driven policy making processes. The Labour Government reduced the number of targets for councils from over 1200 to less than 200 national performance indicators as part of the local public service agreements / local area agreements. The Coalition Government has announced that it is abolishing public service agreements and local area agreements. An announcement is expected on 20<sup>th</sup> October as part of the comprehensive spending review.

3.5.3 From a Gypsy and Traveller perspective, this will have little direct effect, as there were no specific relevant indicators. Indirectly, however, the department strategic objectives (DSOs) and public service agreements (PSAs) have previously focussed on building cohesive communities through the provision of new pitches and tackling unauthorised encampments.

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/news/2010/august/commission-says-fairness-must-be-at-the-heart-of-budget-decisions/>.

<sup>15</sup> Stockdale, L. and Twinch, E. (2010): Gypsy Sites Budget Cut After £15m Underspend: Inside Housing, 20<sup>th</sup> August.



### 3.6 Regional Policy Making

3.6.1 Potentially, the most significant change is at the regional level with the demise of this tier of policy making. Not only are regional spatial strategies being abolished but also regional development agencies are being disbanded. In addition, the Government has announced that it will no longer support and fund regional leaders boards that recently replaced regional assemblies. Government Offices in the Regions will also be dismantled<sup>16</sup>.

3.6.2 The Government formally announced in early July 2010 that regional spatial strategies were being revoked with immediate effect<sup>17</sup>. The formal abolition of regional spatial strategies will take place through the forthcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill.

3.6.3 In a guidance letter to the chief planning officers of local authorities<sup>18</sup>, additional information was provided on the implications of revoking RSS. From the perspective of Gypsies and Travellers, the key points included:-

- In terms of determining planning applications, councils will no longer have to have regard to the Regional Spatial Strategy but may take into account evidence that informed its preparation. This suggests that regional assessments of the number of pitches are still a relevant consideration.
- Councils must continue to prepare local development frameworks (LDFs) i.e. core strategies and specific development plan documents (DPDs). Suspensions or delays in the preparation of plans including policies on the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches is, thus, not acceptable.
- Paragraph 14 of the guidance letter explicitly sets out the situation regarding the determination of levels of provision

“Local councils are best placed to assess the needs of travellers. The abolition of Regional Strategies means that local authorities will be responsible for determining the right level of site provision, reflecting local need and historic demand, and for bringing forward land in DPDs. They should continue to do this in line with current policy. *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments* (GTAAAs) have been undertaken by all local authorities and if local authorities decide to review the levels of provision these assessments will form a good starting point. However, local authorities are not bound by them. We will review relevant regulations and guidance on this matter in due course.”

3.6.4 This reiterates the localism approach to policy making (see above) with Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments as one of many policy considerations.

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<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.gosw.gov.uk/>.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1632149>.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/letterregionalstrategies>

### 3.6.5 South West Perspective

The Regional Spatial Strategy process has been abandoned. But, as has already been pointed out, the data and information collected as part of the process may still be relevant. The salient features have been:-

- The outcome of the single issue review of the Regional Spatial Strategy on additional pitch requirements was published in June 2008.

By strategic housing market area (HMA) (see below), the following figures were proposed for the period up to 2011:-

- Mendip (as part of the West of England HMA)
  - 57 residential pitches
  - 30 transit pitches
- Taunton HMA (including Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and West Somerset)
  - Taunton Deane : 20 residential pitches + 5 transit pitches
  - Sedgemoor : 17 residential pitches
  - West Somerset : 4 residential pitches
- South Somerset HMA
  - 20 residential pitches + 10 transit pitches
- The data underpinning these figures was derived from a benchmarking study undertaken by a team lead by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham<sup>19</sup>. This research focussed on comparing the adequacy of the seven Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) that had been undertaken in the mid part of the decade by the groups of local authorities in the seven strategic housing market areas in the region.
- The Government's proposed changes to the overall Regional Spatial Strategy were published in July 2008. A twelve-week consultation period took place.
- In September 2009, however, the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) announced that a further work would take place on sustainability appraisal<sup>20</sup>.
- As a result the proposed South West Regional Spatial Strategy had not been approved by the time it was abandoned.

## 3.7 Policy Making at Sub-Regional and Local Levels

3.7.1 Policy making processes at these geographical levels are becoming more important because of the decentralisation and localism agendas of the Coalition

<sup>19</sup> See [http://www.swcouncils.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a\\_id=3593](http://www.swcouncils.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=3593).

<sup>20</sup> See [http://www.swcouncils.gov.uk/media/News/492\\_RSS\\_SW.pdf](http://www.swcouncils.gov.uk/media/News/492_RSS_SW.pdf). This was because of legal challenges to the adequacy of the sustainability appraisal for the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy.

Government. But it is also a challenging time to set out the framework because of the uncertainty over the direction of policy making and public expenditure reductions. The latter is illustrated, for example, in the press release by the leader of Somerset County Council in early September 2010<sup>21</sup>, and the on-going challenges faced by West Somerset District Council<sup>22</sup>. They highlight that difficult decisions have to be made over priorities and the way in which local authorities develop and deliver services.

3.7.2 As is highlighted in the final section of this report chapter, this suggests that new approaches will be needed on the development and delivery of strategies to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

### **3.8 Sub-Regional Dimension**

3.8.1 Implicit in the Coalition Government's statements on the revoking of RSS and the abolition of regional policy making is that some areas of policy are most effectively organised at a sub-regional level e.g. housing, strategic planning, economic development and transport. This is particularly true of two-tier areas of local Government. It would therefore appear that strategic housing market assessments (HMAs) and Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAAs) would continue to be carried out at a sub-regional or county scale wherever possible.

3.8.2 An added complexity is provided by proposals for local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) as replacements for regional development agencies and it remains to be seen whether Somerset's application for a LEP is approved<sup>23</sup>. This could take place as early as March 2011. As the Local Government Chronicle has pointed out, these will not necessarily be aligned with existing strategic housing market assessment areas. But they are likely to become the basis for all sub-regional policy making<sup>24</sup>. The deadline for submissions to the Government on LEP proposals was the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010. In total, 56 proposals have been submitted - two of which are relevant for Somerset:-

- 'Heart of the South West' LEP comprising the county council and all of the districts<sup>25</sup>; and
- South Somerset and East Devon LEP.

3.8.3 The latter bid is part of a joint initiative by both councils based on a strategic alliance to develop shared policies and services<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/irj/public/news/directory/articles?rid=/guid/f0656d35-6899-2d10-d087-9059c920e9ff>.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Keeling R (2010): West Somerset 'too small to be viable': Local Government Chronicle, 4<sup>th</sup> May.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/localGovernment/1638131>.

<sup>24</sup> Local Government Chronicle (2010): Battle Lines are Drawn over LEPs: 15<sup>th</sup> July, p 16.

<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/irj/public/news/directory/articles?rid=/guid/d0458725-3f9e-2d10-8b94-f86961d436b3>.

Government guidance emphasised that proposals should be based on functional economic areas rather than administrative areas. In particular, bids covering a single existing county were not recommended. There is no presumption that every area will have an LEP. It is, therefore, likely that Somerset may not have a LEP. This will raise challenging issues on strategic policy making as well as resulting in less favourable treatment on resource allocation through organisations such as the Homes and Communities Agency.

### **3.9 Local Authority Policy Making**

3.9.1 There is a complex policy making framework within the broader environment of a fast-changing strategic approach to decision making. Somerset has:-

- A two-tier local Government structure comprising a county council and five districts;
- Exmoor National Park Authority; and
- Parish and Town Councils (which may become more important through the localism and big society agendas)

3.9.2 The three key policy documents in relation to the needs of Gypsies and Travellers are the local sustainable community strategies, the local development frameworks (LDFs) and the local investment plan (LIPs). The role of each of these is briefly discussed below.

3.9.3 In order to ensure that the needs of Gypsies and Travellers are prioritised, it is essential that relevant policies be incorporated into each of these plans.

3.9.4 Local sustainable community strategies are produced by district and county councils. They have been referred to as the 'plan of plans' i.e. the key over-arching strategy for the local authority area. They are the responsibility of the local strategic partnership (LSP) and have previously been taken forward at a county level through a local area agreement (LAA) with the Government. The LSP for the county is the Somerset Strategic Partnership.

3.9.5 There are three interlinked issues to appreciate:-

- County and district local sustainable community strategies should be closely interlinked in terms of processes and priorities.
- There appears to be varying degrees of priority attached to addressing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in local sustainable community strategies in Somerset.

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<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/about-us/our-partnership-with-east-devon-district-council> and [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/shared\\_services](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/shared_services).

- The Coalition Government has announced the abolishment of Local Area Agreements. This may provide opportunities for LSPs to review their priorities during 2011/12. This may create opportunities to highlight the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

3.9.6 The local development framework (LDF) primarily consists of a core strategy and specific DPDs. It is sometimes referred to as the 'spatial manifestation of the local sustainable community strategy'. It is primarily a district function. From a Gypsy and Traveller perspective, it is these policy statements that provide the strategy for sites, pitches and plots. GTAA's form part of the information that contributes to the development of these policies. The demise of RSS creates a relatively greater degree of autonomy for councils in preparing their LDFs. Nevertheless, it must be noted that planning policies are still based on evidence and the GTAA is an important part of that.

3.9.7 Traditionally, the needs of Gypsies and Travellers have been addressed to some extent in local housing strategies and sub-strategies (e.g. local homelessness strategies in each of Somerset's district councils). Indeed some districts have had a separate Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Strategy, such as South Somerset as well as Mendip for example. At a district council level, for example, Mendip Council's housing strategy 2010-2015 makes reference to the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. It highlights as part of its action plan to improve partnership working with Gypsies and Travellers and other minority ethnic groups. Similarly, the Somerset Homeless Review and Prevention Strategy 2008-2011 may need to be updated to take account of the findings of this project, as will the county-wide umbrella strategy on rough sleepers and the more specific district initiatives.

3.9.8 However, the previous government as part of its attempt to reduce the burden of policy making imposed on councils, recommended that new approaches should be adopted. In two-tier areas (such as Cumbria and Lincolnshire) there has been a move towards county-wide housing strategies and sub-plans with local district action programmes. It would appear that the coalition government not only supports this approach but also will expect it to be taken forward more rigorously.

3.9.9 In taking forward the work on Gypsies and Travellers in relation to strategies and action plans, it is important to align them with new and emerging policy making systems.

3.9.10 It is, however, important to appreciate that the coalition Government intends to radically reform the planning system<sup>27</sup>. The intention is to establish a new planning policy framework based on the Conservative Party's 'open source proposals'. This will give local communities a much greater role in determining the use of land. There is little detail available at present. But the Government announced in August 2010 that it will take forward a 'new homes bonus scheme'<sup>28</sup>, as part of the comprehensive

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<sup>27</sup> See Communities and Local Government (2010): Draft Communities and Local Government Structural Reform Plans: London, CLG – see section three p 8 and <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1634947>.

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/newsroom/1681360>.

spending review. It involves councils being rewarded financially for supporting additional housing development. More generally, the CLG Structural Reform Plan recommends that councils begin working on a new localist approach prior to proposals in the forthcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill, which will be the legislative vehicle for these changes. This could create opportunities to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers but it might also intensify nimbyism pressures.

### 3.10 Local Investment Planning

3.10.1 A relatively new part of the local policy making framework, local investment planning (previously known as the Single Conversation process) is the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) working jointly with local authorities and their partners to achieve shared local ambitions for housing and regeneration. The outcome of this process is, in the first instance, a Local Investment Plan (LIP), which is an investment strategy tailored to the needs of the local area setting out the joint investments and interventions required to achieve the agreed vision.

3.10.2 In Somerset, work on the LIP is being led by Somerset's local authority Regeneration Directors Group and an agreed first LIP is expected shortly (October 2010). Central to the plan are the following five priority themes:

1. Broaden and strengthen the local economy;
2. Plan for new sustainable communities to be built in Somerset;
3. A stronger and more diverse market town and rural economy;
4. Show strong and effective local leadership through working together and aligning our delivery plans; and
5. Prepare for and respond to the impact on Somerset of climate change

3.10.3 The investment priorities in this plan will be delivered primarily through a strategy which supports the prioritisation of investment to deliver strategic levels of development in Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater, locally significant development in Somerset's market towns, and local needs development in the villages and rural areas.

3.10.4 From a Gypsy and Traveller perspective, the 4<sup>th</sup> priority theme – Leadership – is one of the key areas in the development of a shared housing service, which links to service areas such as meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. More specifically, the emerging investment programmes have no specific Gypsy and Traveller schemes. There is a concern that the current draft of the LIP fails to distinguish new provision for Gypsy and Traveller communities from other investment priorities. The key danger, as highlighted by one of the district councils, is that the 10% allocation for rural housing is seen as the natural home for Gypsy and Traveller site provision. This could see tensions and conflict in the future between those trying to balance the need for rural housing and for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

<b>The research team recommends that more specific mention is made of Gypsy and Traveller schemes in the LIP process.</b>
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3.10.5 However, there is a degree of uncertainty over the future of the Homes and Communities Agency and the local investment planning process. The Homes and Communities Agency announced its responses on 25<sup>th</sup> May and 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010 to the Government's public spending review. This included significant cutbacks in capital investment for 2010/11 as well as an organisational restructuring. Further decisions will follow on from the outcome of the comprehensive spending review in October 2010.

3.10.6 From the perspective of meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers, the announcements in May and June included the following decision on funding for sites for Gypsies and Travellers: "Gypsy and Traveller programme - £30 million: The 2010/11 bidding round (on which bids have been made, but not decided) will not proceed."<sup>28</sup>

3.10.7 It is unlikely that there will be clarity over this funding stream for future years until after the Government's comprehensive spending review in October 2010.

### **3.11 Delivery and Implementation**

3.11.1 Although it is important to ensure that policy making processes lead to clarity over the prioritisation of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers, these are by themselves insufficient to ensure that provision of sites is achieved. Policy making and policy have to be aligned with delivery.

3.11.2 The previous sections have identified a number of significant implementation challenges over the medium term. These include:-

- Uncertainty over future funding allocations for sites from 2011 / 2012 onwards. It is unclear on the extent to which Local Investment Plans will prioritise the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.
- Changes to the planning system by the Government to reflect its focus on decentralising decision making to local communities. This could result in stronger pressures for nimbyism.
- The impact of public expenditure cuts at a local level could result in difficult choices over prioritisation for local politicians leading to a marginalisation of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

3.11.3 There are, thus, considerable grounds for concern over whether policies will be delivered.

3.11.4 Nevertheless, there are opportunities and steps that can be taken that provide a more optimistic scenario. These are interrelated and include place based budgets, co-production, local delivery vehicles and planning agreements.



### 3.12 Place-Based Budgets

3.12.1 Place based budgets are the latest step in the total place and total capital agendas<sup>29</sup>. This is an initiative developed and supported by both the previous and current Governments. It centres on achieving better outcomes for local communities while saving public expenditure. Although Somerset was not a formal pilot, the National Housing Federation has pointed out that it was one of nearly a hundred informal schemes<sup>30</sup>. The Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership allocated approximately £250,000 for work on total place. The Somerset Strategic Partnership has taken the lead on this activity<sup>31</sup>. It has involved a focus on 'removing the barriers to health and well-being'. The initiative centres on transformational change for health and social care and support for 'high contact families' i.e. those with the greatest needs. The two successful specific bids for funding have the following features that are relevant for meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers:-

- Cross-cutting theme that brings together a wide range of public and voluntary sector agencies. Including local Government, health, the policy and third sector bodies. It is led by the Somerset Strategic Partnership.
- Focusing on reducing the dependency of individuals, families and communities on public services.
- Improving the life chances of disadvantaged families and communities.
- Improving straightforward and easy access to public services including advice and support.

Clearly, there is considerable merit in engaging with this exercise in relation the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

**The research team recommends a place-based approach to Gypsy and Traveller issues in Somerset, this can avoid duplication of services, identify gaps in services where needs have yet to be met, and look for the most cost efficient ways of working across the districts and between government tiers and with relevant agencies to deliver the most appropriate services to communities in Somerset.**

<sup>29</sup> An up-to-date outline of this agenda can be found in Parry K (2010): Total Place: London, House of Commons Library, Standard Motes SN/PC/05643.

<sup>30</sup> Robson B (2010): Total Place: London, NHF.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk/somerset-total-place-programme/>.



### 3.13 Co-production

3.13.1 A second approach on implementation is co-production<sup>32</sup>. This again is an initiative that has been promoted by the previous and current Governments. It centres on transferring delivery of services to local groups. The coalition Government has not fully developed this concept as part of its 'big society'. But it has launched twelve pathfinder mutual schemes<sup>33</sup>. They include a scheme in Mansfield to deliver housing support to vulnerable households and a project in Leicester for health care for homeless people. There are likely to be opportunities to adopt this type of approach for meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. It could be applied to Gypsy and Traveller site provision. Councils and other public sector agencies could explicitly be encouraged to facilitate self-provision of sites by Gypsies and Travellers. This would represent a significant change from existing practice whereby councils provide sites or occasionally have to react to private sector or self-help schemes.

### 3.14 Local Delivery Vehicles

3.14.1 A third approach centres on a greater role for local delivery vehicles. The Homes and Communities Agency is, however, carrying out a national review of LDVs. At the same time, local authorities and other Government agencies, which contribute funding, have been assessing their performance. This is resulting in mergers as well as the abandonment of some LDVs. In a number of cases, the role and function of LDVs is being clarified.

3.14.2 In the case of Somerset, there appears to have been little attempt to develop a county-wide approach for LDVs so as to co-ordinate and deliver investment. This is in marked contrast, for example, to the West of England and its HomeWest initiative<sup>34</sup>. This has enabled the councils in Greater Bristol to take the lead nationally on the single conversation and sign off an agreed LIP and LIA.

3.14.3 Nevertheless, there are a number of more specific LDVs in Somerset and these include:-

- Into Somerset: This is the inward investment vehicle for economic development.
- Yeovil Vision: This is the generation agency for this strategically significant town.
- Project Taunton: Regenerating Taunton's town centre.

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<sup>32</sup> A number of co-production models have been part of the current Government's discourse on 'Big Society' it seems to centre on the notion of having service users involved in the design and delivery of some public services. Some councils are piloting or prototyping models of co-production, for example the 'John Lewis' model in Lambeth has more of a mutual approach and encourages citizens to be shareholders of community assets, whilst in Barnet, the 'Easbyborough' model pares services down and asks for additional payment for services above the basic.

<sup>33</sup> See [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news\\_releases/2010/100812-pathfinder-mutuals.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100812-pathfinder-mutuals.aspx).

<sup>34</sup> See <http://www.westofengland.org/meetings/homes-west>.

- Community land trusts (CLT): There were, for example, discussions in 2009 on establishing a joint Dorset and Somerset CLT that would act as an 'umbrella social enterprise' to support individual village and town initiatives.

3.14.4 There is clearly an opportunity to link together the ideas of co-production and social enterprise with local delivery vehicles to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

### 3.15 Planning Agreements

3.15.1 Lastly, there is the potential of utilising planning gain type of agreements, such as Section 106 agreements. Planning agreements have occasionally been used to provide Gypsy and Traveller sites, with the developer and/or landowner agreeing to provide a site as part of an agreement that is linked to a planning permission. The future potential for such agreements is now limited by the need to meet the following 3 statutory tests, whereby the agreement should be:

- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- (b) directly related to the development; and
- (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

3.15.2 There is some uncertainty over the future of planning agreements as the coalition government is reviewing their use along with the recently introduced Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is designed to fund the provision of infrastructure through a fixed sum of money per dwelling or m<sup>2</sup> of development.

3.15.3 The coalition government has also announced that it intends to proceed with the development of a 'new homes bonus scheme' (see above). The funds generated by this scheme would be available for locally identified priorities, which could include meeting the needs of Gypsy and Travellers. The potential of this approach may be clearer following the announcement of the comprehensive spending review 2010.

**The research team recommends that district councils explore the use of planning gain type agreements, as long as they are in existence, in an aim to ensure Gypsy and Traveller sites are included in new housing development schemes, where appropriate. This is particularly important when planning significant urban extensions.**

## 4. FINDINGS: CURRENT ACCOMMODATION, SITE MANAGEMENT, TRAVELLING AND POPULATION INFORMATION

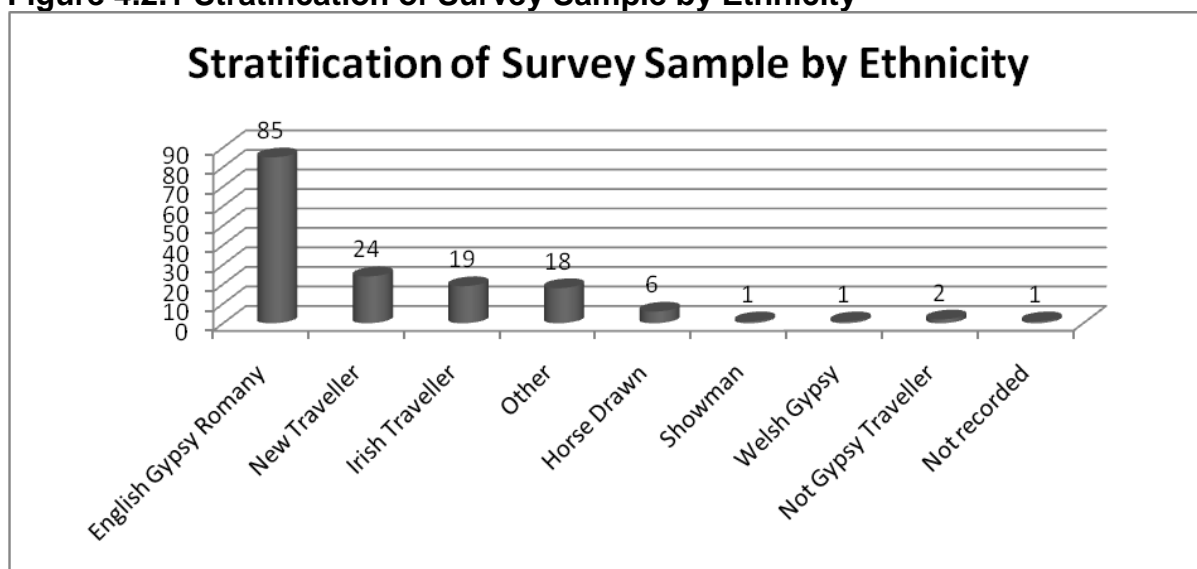
### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This part of the report brings together a number of key areas including Gypsy-Traveller population information, current accommodation and access to sites, management of sites and information on travelling and transit sites.

### 4.2 Population Information

4.2.1 Detailed information on stratification of the population according to ethnicity and type of accommodation was provided in chapter two on methodology, according to labels ascribed by the client and the research team. Respondents were asked to self-define and all but one did so. The respondent who did not self-define was part of the New Traveller sample, but the issue of exonyms<sup>35</sup> are sensitive in Gypsy and Traveller research and so it is an important issue to raise here and explains why in the chart below, and in some others throughout the report there is a respondent labelled 'not recorded'. In other charts, some groups have been put together for ease of reporting (for example Welsh Gypsies, Showmen and 'other'). The sample population of 157 people is stratified by ethnicity as follows:

**Figure 4.2.1 Stratification of Survey Sample by Ethnicity**



4.2.2 We can see that the largest ethnic group amongst respondents include those who identify themselves as English Gypsy/Romany Gypsy at 54% of the survey population (85 surveys). New Travellers were the second largest group with 15% of the survey population (24 surveys). The number of green coloured surveys targeted

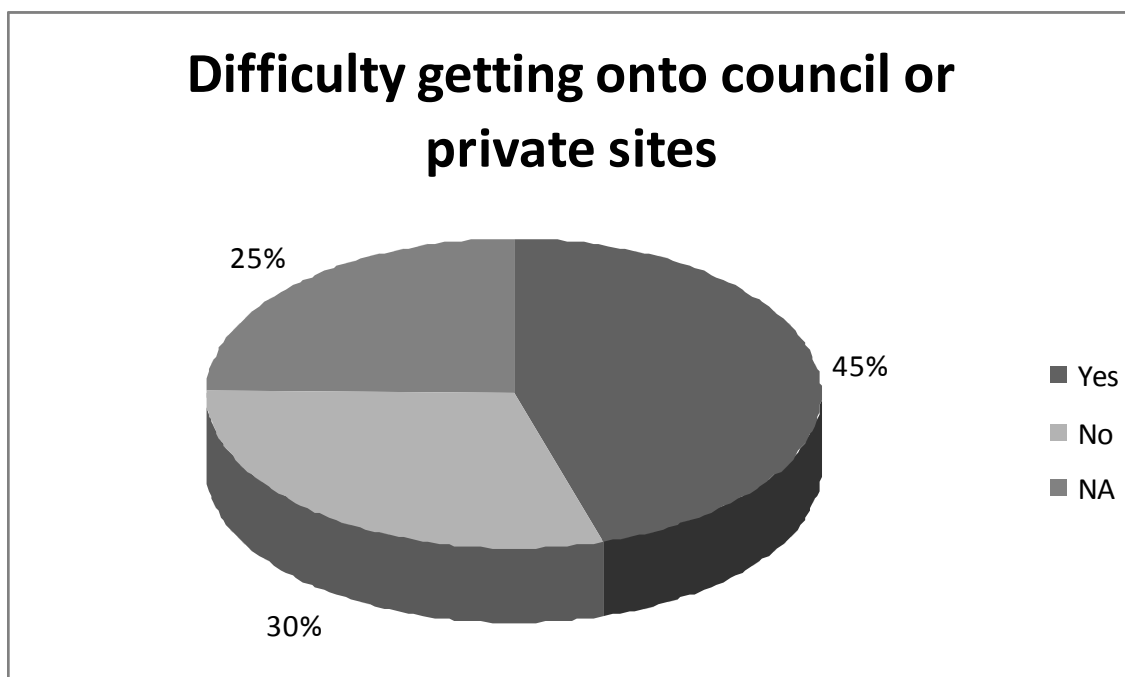
<sup>35</sup> Labels imposed on communities, as opposed to ethnonyms which are self prescribed by the community member themselves

at New Travellers which were completed were 43 in total, so not all respondents to green coloured surveys identified themselves as New Travellers. As one can see from Figure 4.2.1 above, 18 respondents identified as 'other' and many of these were completed on New Traveller survey forms as well as 6 respondents (4%) of the survey sample specifically recording themselves as 'horse-drawn'. Two (2) respondents specifically identified themselves as 'non-Gypsy/Traveller' and a third person who said they were not Gypsy or Traveller wished to be recorded as 'other'. There was one Showman and one respondent identifying as Welsh Gypsy. A number of respondents who the team had identified as part of the 'New Traveller' part of the sample said that they wished to be known as 'Showmen', however they acknowledged that they were not part of the Showmen's guild but did not like being labelled as 'New Traveller' and felt that their trade and expertise should allow them to be called Showmen. This debate on identities and labels is awkward, but the team kept to the strict definition of Showmen as being members of the Showmen's Guild, and so that is why a number of New Travellers felt they had no choice but to identify as 'other'. Finally on the subject of stratification by ethnicity, the third largest group recorded was Irish Traveller at 12% of the sample (18 respondents). The project team wished to survey more Irish Travellers on sites, but they did not wish to take part so this group is under-represented in that aspect of the survey; however they are over-represented in the roadside/unauthorised encampment section of the survey.

### **4.3 Accessing council and private sites**

4.3.1 An important aspect of social housing provision is access and availability of accommodation. In relation to Gypsy and Traveller sites 45% of respondents (71) said that they had had problems accessing a place on council and private sites.

Figure 4.3.1 Accessing places on council and private sites



4.3.2 Details given by respondents, in their own words, on why they felt accessing a place on sites included:

- There are no places
- All full with waiting lists. Gypsies and Travellers don't want us on their sites
- All full, Or sites have non Gypsies on
- Always Full
- As far as I know, there are no council sites with pitches are available – private sites have very limited grazing
- Authorities didn't agree and we got evicted
- Because there are no pitches available
- Council and Private site don't allow new age Travellers. Huge discrimination
- Council sites are very poorly run. Only stayed on private until family returned
- Due to my work, people help and extended family. There is a long waiting list 2 or 3 years and up to 5 on others
- Gypsy Liaison Officer for Somerset said my brother was not a Gypsy, yet the council site was full of non Gypsies
- Had to buy our own land for somewhere to live
- Had to wait two years for our pitch
- Informal waiting lists. Don't know of many
- Irish Travellers (conflict) on Bristol Site (Rose Meadow View)<sup>36</sup>.
- Lack of pitches- long waiting list.
- Long waiting lists. Not enough sites and pitches to go round
- My children can't get on the site. GLO said they should go in houses.

<sup>36</sup> Outside the GTAA study area for Somerset, but clearly the issues on sites in neighbouring authority areas is having an impact on Gypsies and Travellers currently residing in or resorting to the county of Somerset.

- Never found one
- No Grazing
- No places available
- No room as we have a big family
- Not appropriate for Horse drawn
- Only for Romani and Irish Travellers
- Only people we know let us share a pitch
- There are no pitches and gorgias (non Gypsies) are on their existing ones
- There are no pitches vacant on any site
- There are no spare pitches and there hasn't been any for years
- They don't like Irish
- Tried all sites in Somerset, long waiting lists
- Stopping places gated off, verges ditched and bouldered off
- Tried lots of councils. No luck. No pitches available
- Tried to move to Ilton, long waiting list
- Waiting lists
- Waiting lists on authority site. Friends and family do let us have short stays
- Waiting three years, if full up. If you were a gypsy you weren't allowed on
- We did not have any problems here but before we never tried as we were not aware of any council sites or private sites with free
- We felt there were not any in existence
- We don't stay in one place long enough
- We have tried all local sites. Now forced to buy own land
- We were not allowed to go onto a caravan site because our caravan was green<sup>37</sup>

#### **4.4 Existing Accommodation**

4.4.1 Gypsies and Travellers provided information and views on their existing information, on how they feel about the accommodation, facilities and management. Detail on accommodation by type is set out in a moment; but before that existing council site accommodation is discussed.

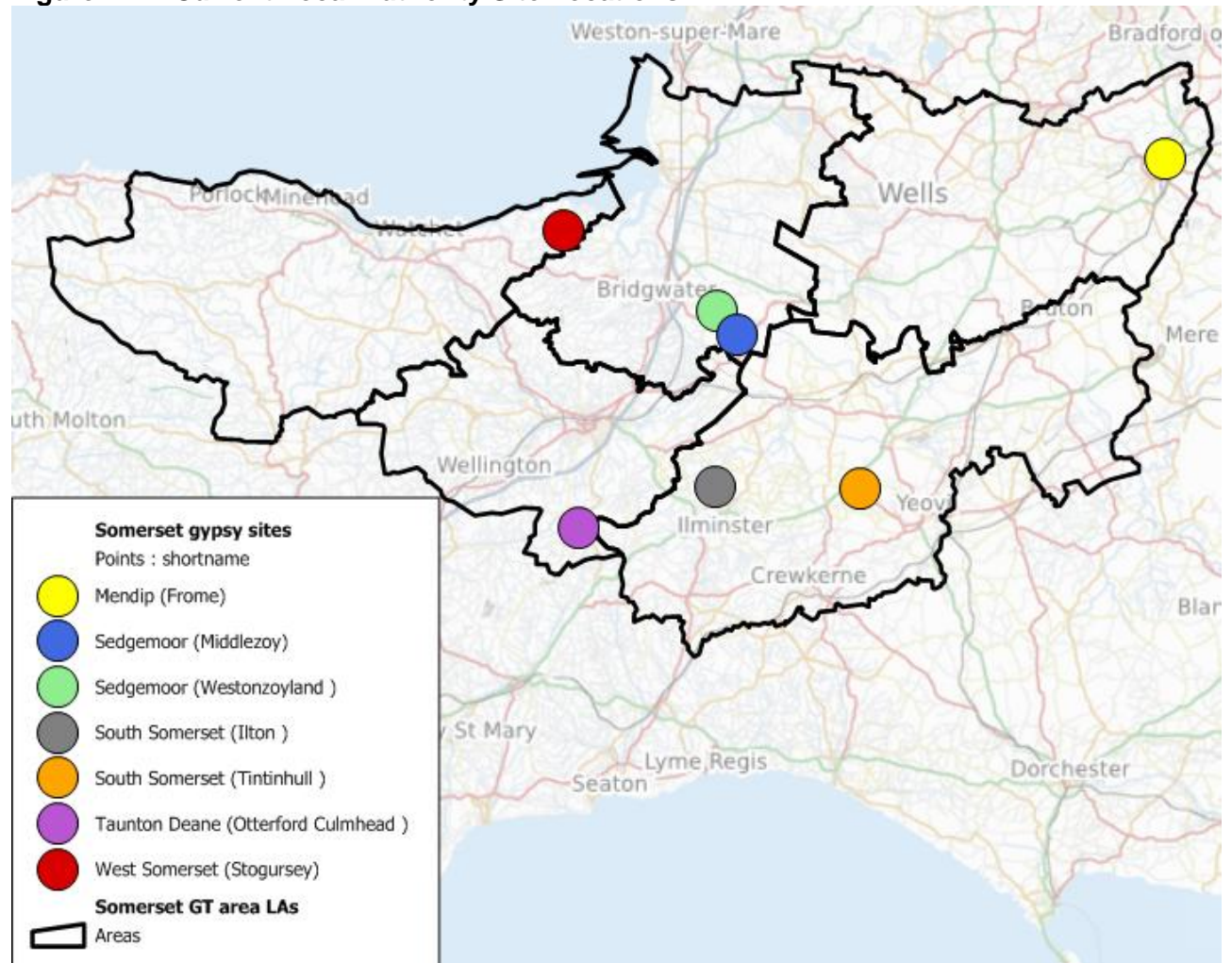
##### *Council accommodation*

Existing council site accommodation is mapped overleaf:

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<sup>37</sup> Response from a New Traveller who felt assumptions were made about their suitability to access a pitch on a private site because their caravan was decorated a different colour.

**Figure 4.4.1 Current Local Authority Site Locations**

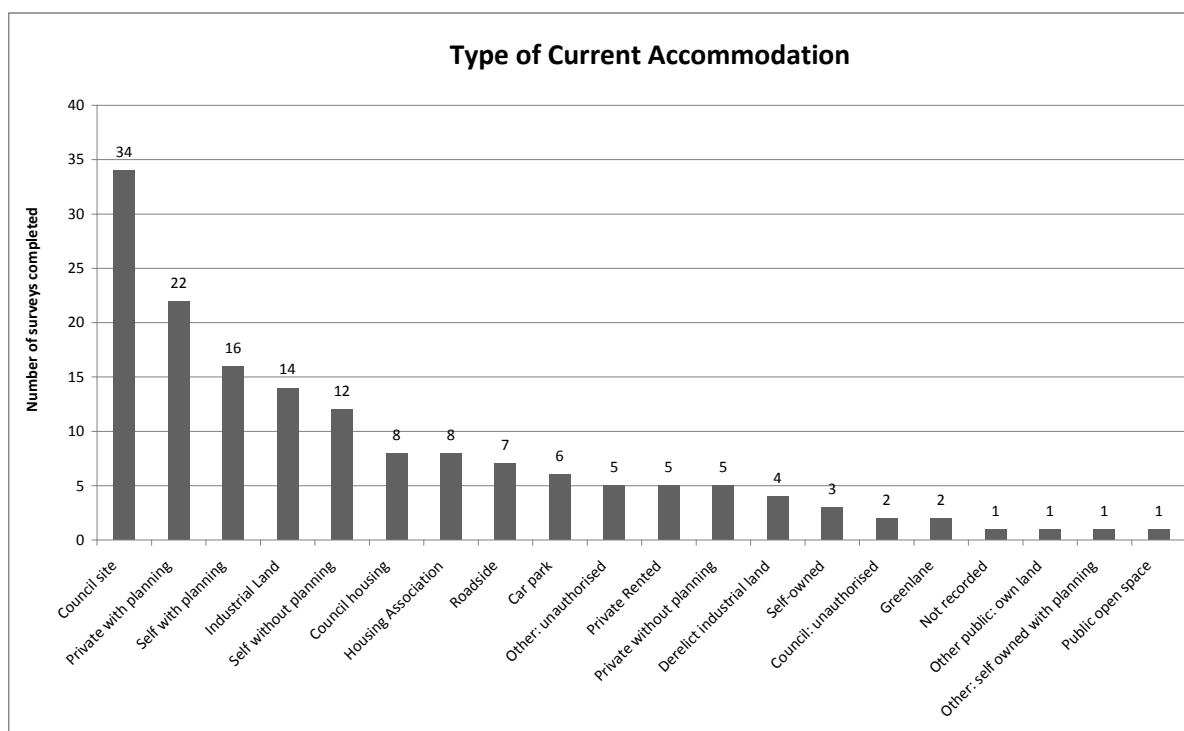


34 respondents currently live on council sites, representing 22% of the total survey sample.

#### 4.4.2 Range of sites and stopping places

The remainder of the survey sample was distributed amongst a range of different types of sites and stopping places and the detail of this is shown in the chart below:

**Figure 4.4.2: Range of sites and stopping places**

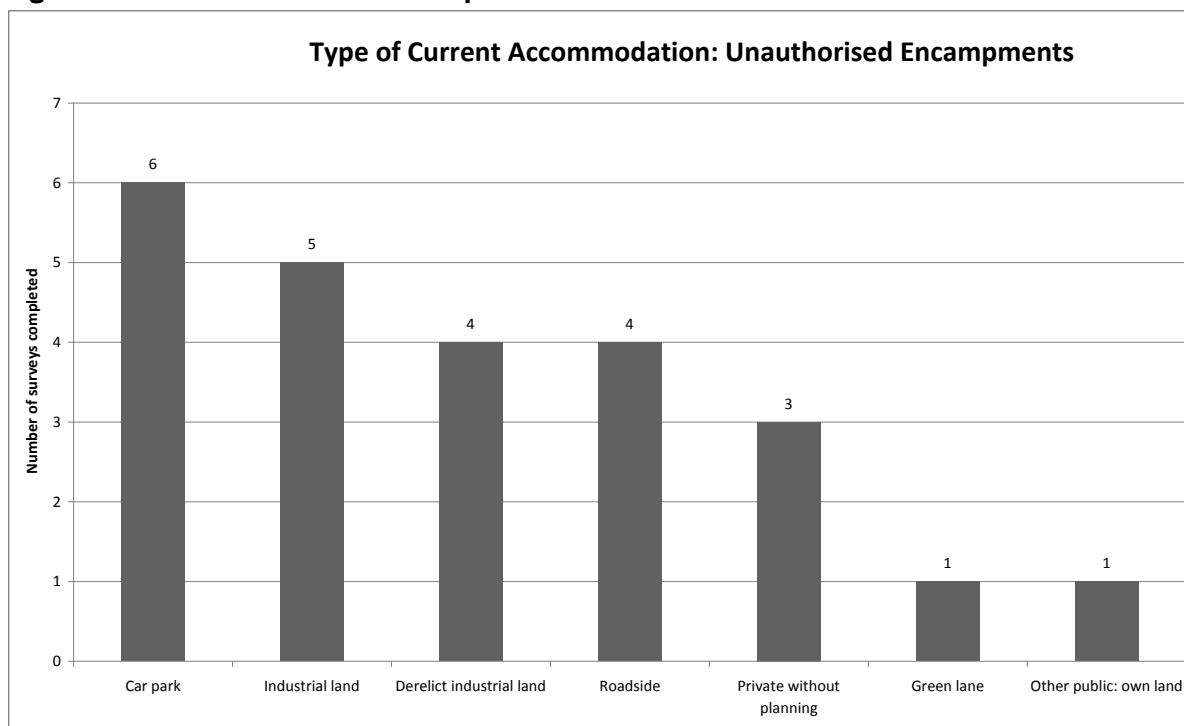




#### 4.4.3 Unauthorised Sites

Fifteen surveys were completed with Gypsies and Irish Travellers on the roadside and unauthorised encampments on the lilac coloured surveys with bespoke questions for this accommodation type. However those respondents identifying as living on unauthorised sites in the chart overleaf number 24 – this figure also captures some of the New Travellers sample who were living on the roadside or other unauthorised stopping place.

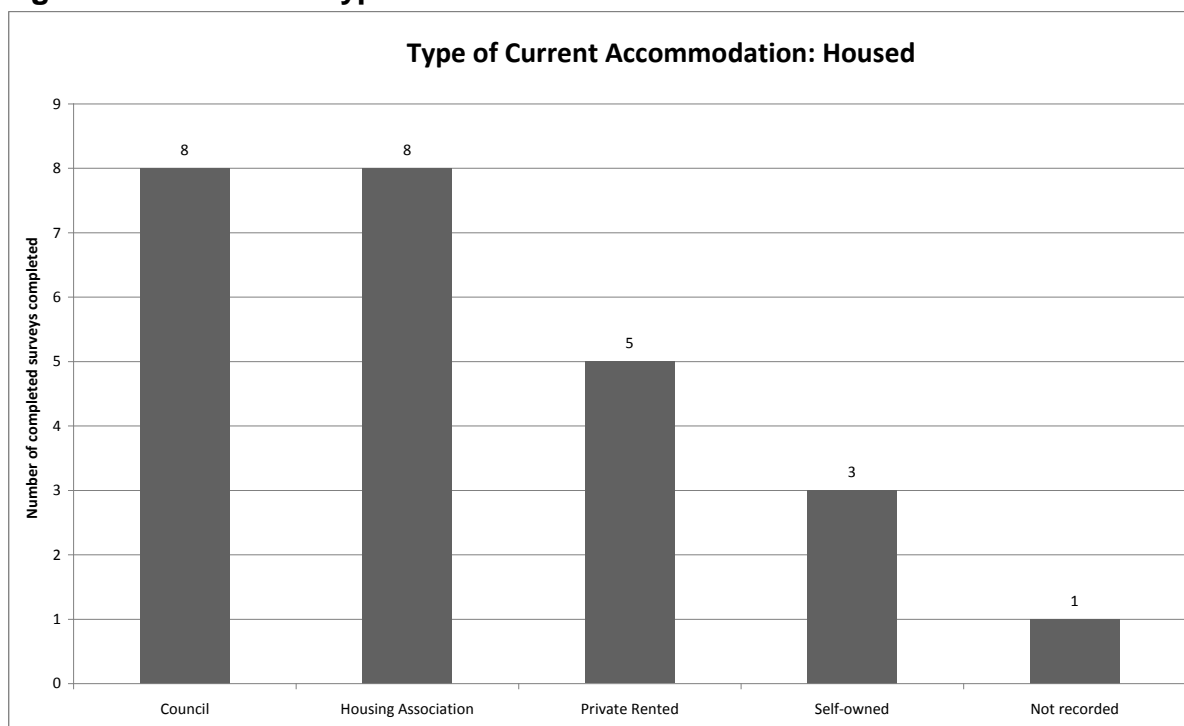
**Figure 4.4.3 Unauthorised encampments**



#### 4.4.4 Gypsies and Travellers in Housing

25 respondents completed the bespoke 'housed' survey forms and the distribution of house-type is shown below with 64% living in social housing (8 in council and 8 in housing association properties).

**Figure 4.4.4 Housed Gypsies and Travellers**



### 4.5 Site Management

4.5.1 There are seven local authority sites (shown at figure 4.4.1 previously). These sites are located across the five district councils but are currently managed by Somerset County Council. Sites are of variable quality, for example the sites in South Somerset have recently been refurbished but others are showing some disrepair to pitches and poorly maintained utility blocks. Site management is currently undertaken by a Gypsy Liaison Officer for the County Council and the topic of management from the perspective of Gypsy and Traveller respondents on sites is discussed in more detail later on in this part of the report. It must be noted though that the county is in the late stages of 'disposing' of its sites, but the research team does not have information on who may be purchasing them. Whilst there is no strong correlation between council ownership and quality of provision, there is an element of control over improving sites whilst the sites remain publicly owned. There are some local authorities who have had to bring sites back into public management because the private contractors have performed badly.

**It is recommended that county council works with districts on the disposal of sites and that any covenants, management agreements or planning conditions open to the councils are used to implement and monitor good quality provision of the stock which has up to now been in public ownership and management. This will have the effect of ensuring control over quality of provision, and access to affordable site accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. Partners who buy or manage sites should be chosen according to a strong set of criteria; covenants and conditions need to be implemented and monitored.**

#### 4.5.2 Fire Safety

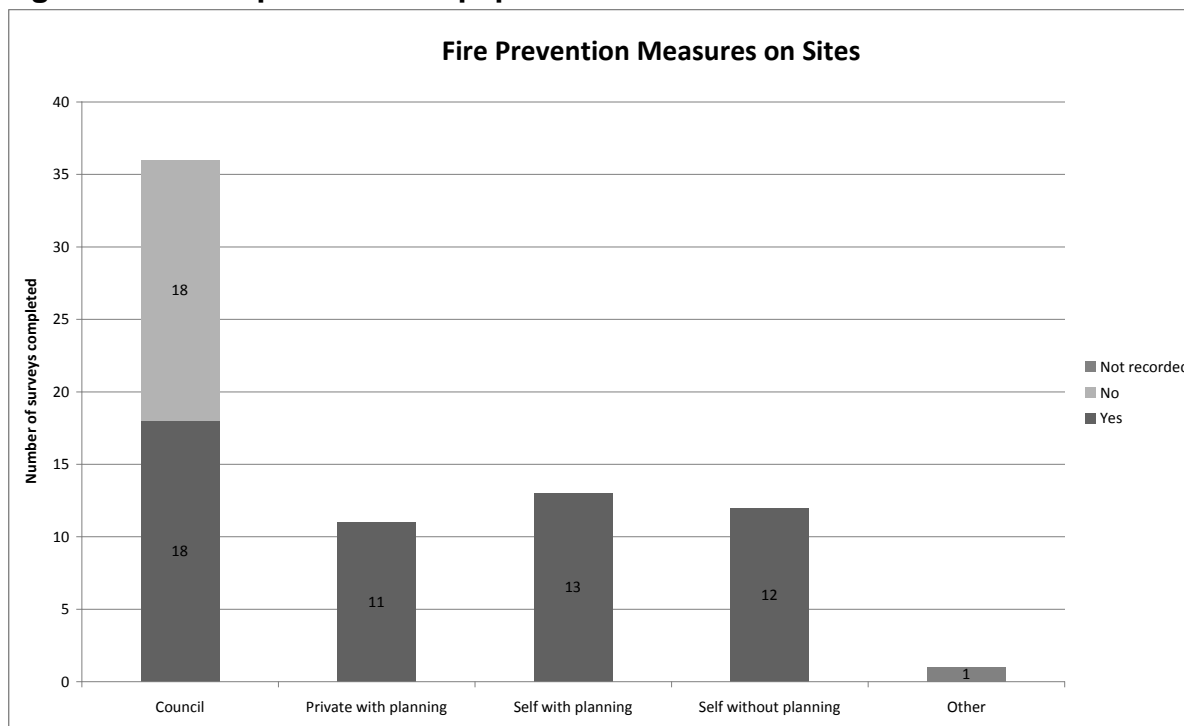
There were a number of issues on current site management; however, one which kept coming to the fore both from surveys and from site visits by members of the project team was *fire safety*. Whilst it is understood that there are improvements being made to council sites and indeed some sites have recently been completely refurbished, this is an issue which concerned the project team and which should be examined quickly by councils to ensure the safety of residents.

A detailed table is included at Appendix B which shows that whilst there may be more that could be done on all sites for fire prevention, there does seem to be a lack of some basic fire safety equipment on council sites. In figure 4.5.1 overleaf, the left hand bar on the chart represents respondents living on council sites who answered the question on fire prevention measures. Whilst all residents on private sites said they had some form of fire prevention (please see Appendix B for more detail), 50% of council site residents answered that they did not have any fire prevention measures.

The head of service overseeing Gypsy and Traveller site management at the County Council, gave a response to this finding:

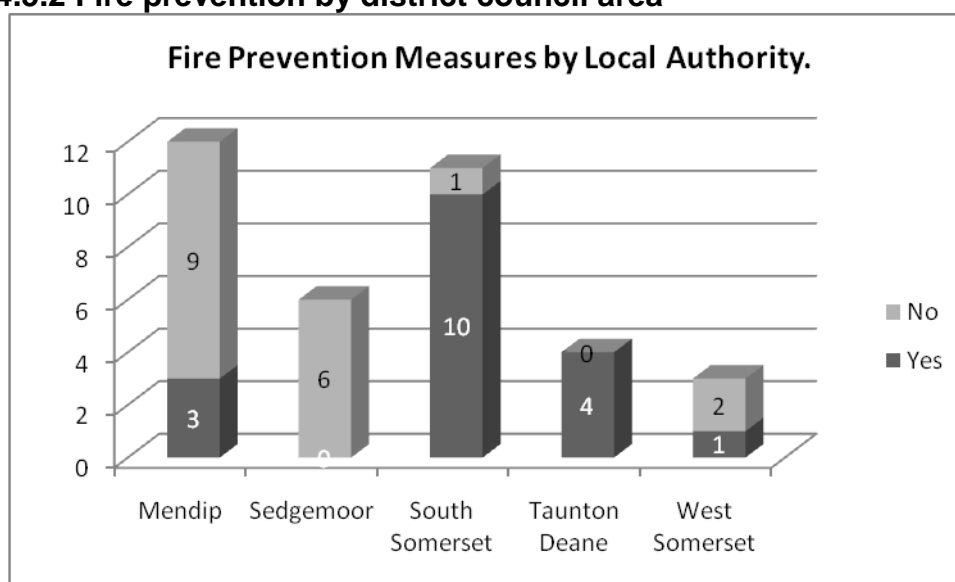
*“From a County Council point of view, in the past hoses were provided but were misused, vandalised or stolen. As such alternative provision was made in consultation with the Fire Safety Officer. It is understood that all residents were offered smoke alarms, and those who did not take up this offer were spoken to about fire safety so that they were clear about the implications of not doing so. Despite nearing the point where its sites are to be disposed of, the County Council is doing further work to assess fire-safety related issues on its sites.”*

**Figure 4.5.1 Fire prevention equipment on site**



4.5.3 The responses on this issue were also stratified by district council area showing some districts had better fire prevention than others. This information can help councils to target resources to the sites most in need.

**Figure 4.5.2 Fire prevention by district council area**



#### 4.5.4 Management of sites

Management and maintenance was raised as an issue during research team site visits and in the surveys. This mostly pertained to council sites, but also in one particular case to a private site where New Travellers reside.

Again, fire safety was a concern raised by Travellers and in particular on the Westonzoyland site in Sedgemoor district. A member of the project team visited the site and it was not easy to find due to lack of signage at the entrance plus the fact that to get to the site one has to drive through an industrial area. The entrance is lined with wooden pallets which may prove to be hazardous in a fire, and the lack of any signs to denote there is a site may have an effect on the ability of the emergency services to access residents in a hurry. A photograph of the entrance to the site is shown below:

**Figure 4.5.3 Entrance to Westonzoyland site**



4.5.5 The Head of Service at the County Council said that:

*“The access to the Westonzoyland site through the pallet site is a concern, and at the request of residents, signs are to be placed on the access route to help find the site, particularly if there was an emergency”.*

#### 4.5.6 Site Maintenance

Maintenance was also discussed and some residents on another council site, in West Somerset, were concerned about damp in the utility blocks and maintenance of outside spaces and pathways. Again, a member of the project team visited this site and some photos are shown below:

**Figure 4.5.4 Damp in utility block**



**Figure 4.5.5 Concrete pitch in disrepair**





4.5.7 Again, the Head of Service at the County Council gave a response to the findings of disrepair on sites:

*“This year, despite the current financial constraints, the Council allocated £50,000 capital money for site improvements, which are ongoing. The work being prioritised is infrastructure rather than cosmetic improvements”.*

#### 4.5.8 Residents’ issues and representation

Some responses on the surveys from residents on council sites were that perhaps the Gypsy Liaison Officer (GLO) didn’t always understand particular needs and issues and that communication was not always easy. However, it must be noted that on the day one of the project team visited the council site in Taunton Deane district the County GLO arrived during that time and visited a number of residents on site. Nevertheless, a number of concerns were raised by residents during the process of the interviews on the quality and style of management. There has been some discussion on these issues with the County Council and the Head of service there. He has met with some of the residents and with members of representative groups to find out more. Representation of residents’ concerns and good communication is very important in the running of a good site and there has been some work by Sally Woodbury on behalf of Friends Families and Travellers and the Gypsy Traveller Advisory Group South West to facilitate representative groups on sites to meet about a variety of issues.

#### 4.5.9 Managing allocations on sites

Responses to the survey in the section ‘about your accommodation’ show that on some council sites there is a perception that a number of pitches are allocated to non Gypsy-Travellers who would otherwise be homeless. Further details on responses were concerned with (1) that this was supposed to be supply for Gypsies and Travellers, and was indeed counted as such officially, but yet it was taken up by non Gypsy-Travellers and (2) some disharmony might result from mixed communities on site. A member of the project team visited a council site in one Somerset district and undertook a survey with one resident, who, it transpired, was not a Gypsy or a Traveller but who had been placed on the site a number of years ago. Across the sample of 157, 3 residents on council sites identified themselves as non Gypsy-Traveller. Members of the survey team said that they could have interviewed more people who were non Gypsy-Traveller but a decision was made to identify those who stated they were Gypsies or Travellers for the survey so that accommodation needs could be properly assessed.

4.5.10 On the same district site referred to above, the residents voiced concern over the allocation on a patch of grassed land at the top of the site (which seems to be given over for transit accommodation as part of the council provision) to a Traveller who had been evicted from another site and who had committed anti-social behaviour and caused real problems for the longer-term residents, but who at the date of the visit to site had moved on.

4.5.11 In response to the finding on allocation of council pitches to non Gypsy-Travellers, the County Council Head of Service said:

*“The County Council currently allocates pitches to gypsies, this is one of the criteria considered (among other issues) before offering pitches to new residents”.*

#### 4.5.12 Basic Facilities

This theme related to a particular private site, rather than council provision. Nevertheless, it is an issue for councils to think about facilitating basic services such as a stand pipe for water. On one of the private sites used by New Travellers and known by the council, there is no running water. Some porta-loos have been provided by the council but the lack of running water has severe health implications. Even though the site is not owned by the council, there should be a way of helping to facilitate fresh water provision on site as established as this one. There are apparent issues of contamination of the land, but there is a new housing development close by and getting water near to the site ought to be possible according to the residents.

4.5.13 Residents on the site did not always make clear which council they were referring to on the issue of basic facilities. It appeared that two officers had visited the site – one enforcement officer from the County Council who had been involved in facilitating the toilets and was aware of the concerns about water – the other officer who had visited the site was from the District Council and was mainly there to seek views and advice on the Community Land Trust initiative.

4.5.14 The research team notes the responses from the Head of Service at the County Council and recommends that:

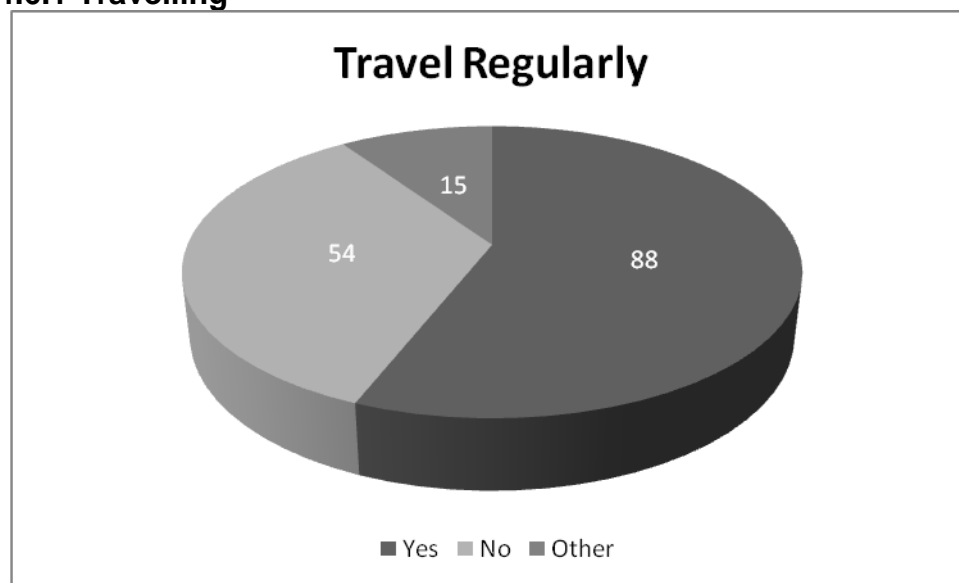
- **The County Council continues its work to assess fire safety on council sites and reports the outcomes and recommendations of this piece of work to the district councils so that future management arrangements, after the disposal of sites has taken place, can be monitored to include fire safety arrangements where appropriate.**
- **The County Council continues with its programme of capital investment whilst the sites remain in public ownership; but that focus is put on some of the issues raised by residents on the state of repair of concrete pitches and the damp in utility blocks.**
- **That a sign is put at the entrance point to the Westonzoyland site off the main access road, to help show visitors (and especially the emergency services) where the site is.**
- **Allocations policies and procedures should be consistently applied and monitored on council sites.**
- **Covenants of sale or management agreements must be included to ensure that sites remain accessible for Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset, even where ownership is transferred.**



## 4.6 About Your Travelling

4.6.1 Not all Gypsies and Travellers undertake regular patterns of travel, and this can be for a number of reasons related to health, need to be near schools, lack of transit sites in other areas and so on. When asked whether they travelled regularly, responses show that over 50% do undertake some travel.

**Figure 4.6.1 Travelling**



- I travel 2 or 3 times a year to Stow fair, Appleby fair and to Ballinasloe horse fair in Ireland
- We just travel for a couple of months in the summer, to Appleby fair and to Stow on the world fair
- I travel to the fairs Stow, Appleby and Bridgwater. I stay a few weeks at each fair. I also go to stay with family
- I Travel to be with family members at Bristol, but I can only do this for a few weeks once a year or I will lose my pitch
- Sometimes I travel to Appleby fair and to see family
- I used to Travel with my parents but since I've been married I don't travel.
- I used to travel to Cornwall to pick Daffs, but since my husband died, I have to just go to the horse fairs. Stow in Wold, Priddy and Bridgwater. I can't travel to work anymore.
- I did, but not so much now. I only travel round Somerset in my bus. Then I found this land for sale, bought it, and moved on.
- We travel to Evesham as my Gran lived there. However, she has now passed away. My Husband's Family live in Swindon, we have stayed there.
- All the fairs and all the races
- We travel all year round but we travel more often in the summer. Working and to fairs etc
- Travel all year with family. Go to friends in summer and to Scotland and Yorkshire, London and Plymouth in winter months

- All horse fairs country wide. I Travel to seek work. Wiltshire, North Somerset and Dorset
- Yes, but wont travel this year as we will lose our pitches
- We don't leave the site come winter but Travels away in spring summer time
- My son picks me up to go to fairs and funerals. Due to old age no longer able to travel
- On previous years employed as a farm labourer in Kent, Cornwall, Herefordshire, Yorkshire. In recent years I've travelled festival circuit.
- Settled in the winter, travel for work and festivals in the summer.
- Only in school holidays

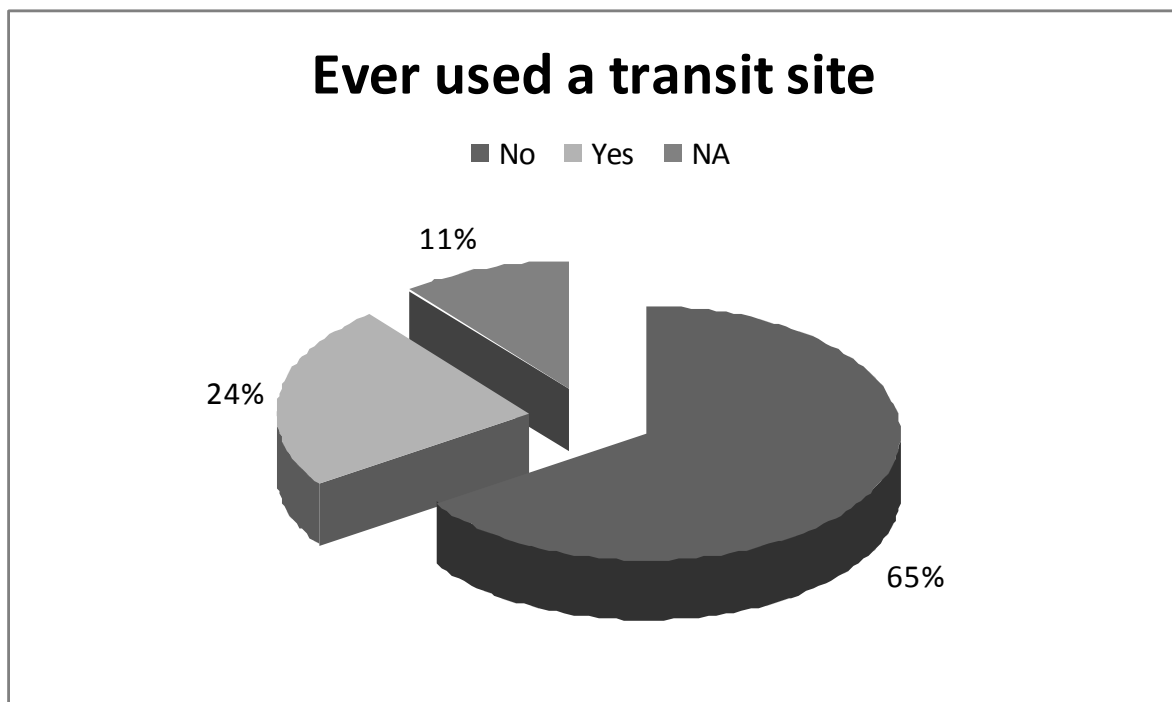
#### **4.7 Use of transit sites**

4.7.1 When asked whether they knew where the nearest transit site was, 68 respondents answered no (43%) so there may be an issue of publicising transit sites in the County and surrounding areas a little more – perhaps through partner agencies working with the Gypsy and Traveller community.

4.7.2 When asked whether they use transit sites, 102 respondents (65%) say they have never stopped on a transit site, but 38 (24%) said they have used such sites – of those prepared to give further details, the following locations were named:

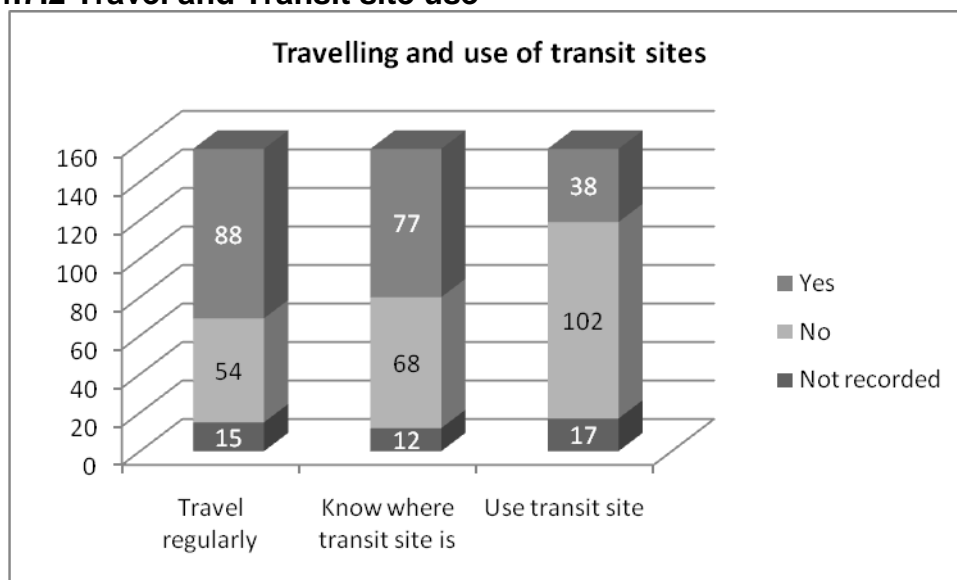
- Middlezoy (12 respondents said they had stopped in this location in the past)
- Bridgwater (7 separate respondents noted Bridgwater)
- Near Nottingham
- Chisledon
- Wrantage Taunton, Water Loo Cross
- Weston Zoyland
- Brighton
- Chiseldon Furs
- All over
- Cornwall
- Cambridge
- Wrantage and Waterloo Cross
- Swindon
- Cornwall, Bridgwater, London etc
- London
- Wiltshire
- Bridgwater, London, Aylesbury
- The Firs in Swindon

**Figure 4.7.1 Use of Transit sites**



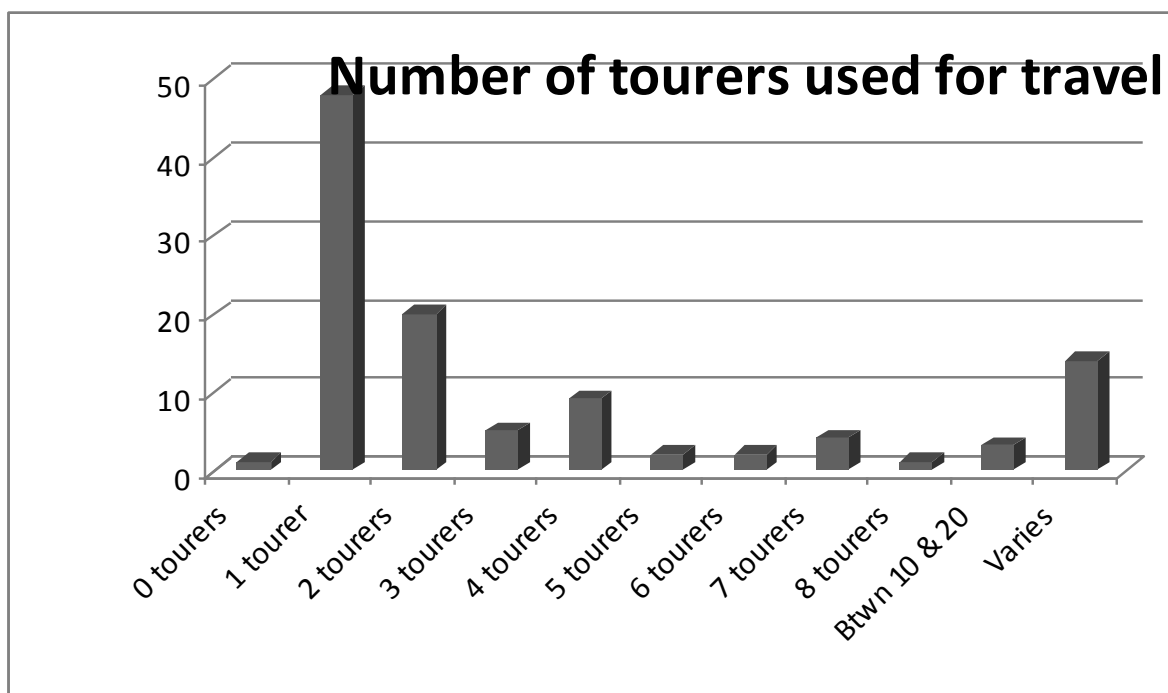
Putting the travel and transit site questions together, the following responses were shown:

**Figure 4.7.2 Travel and Transit site use**



4.7.3 When asked how many vehicles were typically used for travelling, respondents gave the answers below; with most respondents telling us they travel with a small number of tourers:

**Figure 4.7.3 Number of tourers used for travel**



The survey also asked Gypsies and Travellers about their preferred location for transit sites in the future, and these answers are included in chapter five of this report.

## 4.8 Eviction and Move-On

4.8.1 Gypsies and Travellers were also asked about evictions and being moved on. 28 respondents said that they had been evicted and 42 said they had been moved on. In the question asking who had moved them on answers included:

- Police
- Council
- Councillor
- Landlord
- Landowner
- Farmer
- Court

4.8.2 The responses in chart 4.8.1, over the page, show that New Travellers are particularly affected. Some respondents said they had been moved on or evicted many times. Some answers include twelve sets of move-on or eviction events in a year. Others stated that there were too many times to give details.

Figure 4.8.1 Eviction

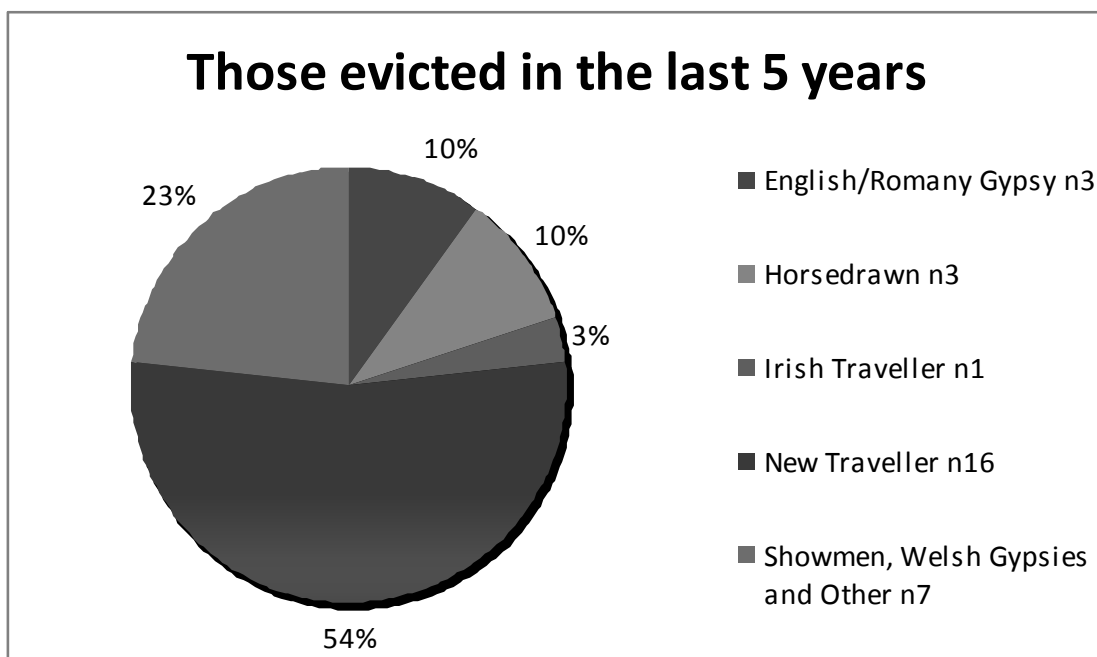
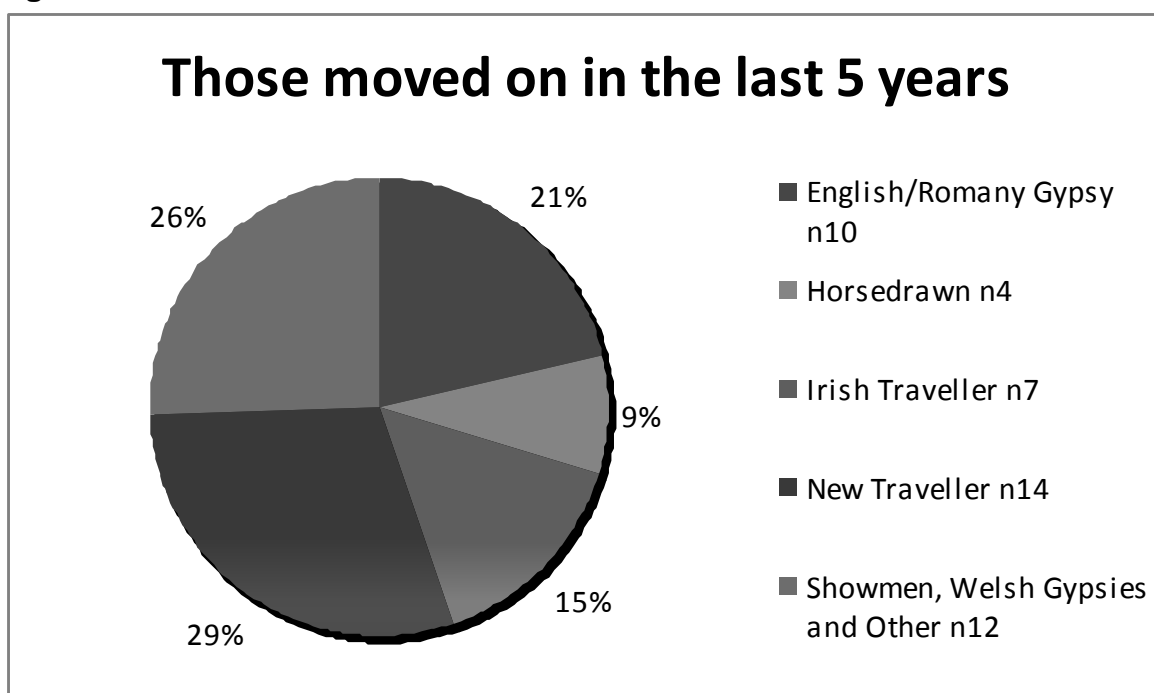


Figure 4.8.2 Moved-on



4.8.3 When asked for details of incidents of move on and eviction, some respondents said they were too countless to mention, or didn't even answer the question because the answer was too complex. However, some respondents did give a picture of move-on (see over page).

- We were moved on from factory sites last year and also Plymouth, public open land and also in Cambridge and Reading
- We have been moved on in Cornwall, Plymouth and Weston Super mare
- We have been constantly moved on for the past 7 years from the north of the country down to the west country
- We don't wait to be evicted. We leave when we are asked to
- Was living on Rose Meadow View in Bristol and the other residents caused a lot of trouble and I was pregnant at the time
- Too numerous to remember
- Somerset evicted, winter months
- So many and so frequently cant list, remember, all details
- Share a pitch with my parents. Council told us to get off
- Priddy in Somerset, Stow in Wold
- Numerous occasions, too many to remember, maybe 300, by police, and local land owners
- Moved on in Mendip due to threats and actual violence when young people threw rocks at the side of the van
- Moved on from privately owned caravan campsite when they found out we were Gypsies
- Moved on from around Frome.
- Moved by police. Taunton, Bridgewater, Wellington, Yeovil many times in the past few years
- Many times since I got married last year. Lived with my family on private site before marriage, No room, had to leave
- Many times
- Last year moved from Bristol, Plymouth and Exeter. So far this year we've been moved from Plymouth and Swindon and Weston Supermare
- Last year (09) we were moved on from several places. Plymouth, Liskeard, Barnstable, Exeter
- Industrial estates in Plymouth last year (09) Also in Barnstable (09) Cambridge (09) and Reading 3 weeks ago
- I have been moved on that many times I forget how many. From Dorset to Somerset, Wiltshire, Derbyshire, Cornwall, Devon for the past 40 years, all my life
- Evicted off site which had no planning, Oxon Lane, North Curry, a year ago. Put on west zoyland site because I was very ill
- Dorset and Bristol
- Constantly, throughout South West England
- Been moved on by police from Glos, Southampton, Wiltshire, Devonshire, Somerset. All over.
- Always moved on before requested to preserve park up

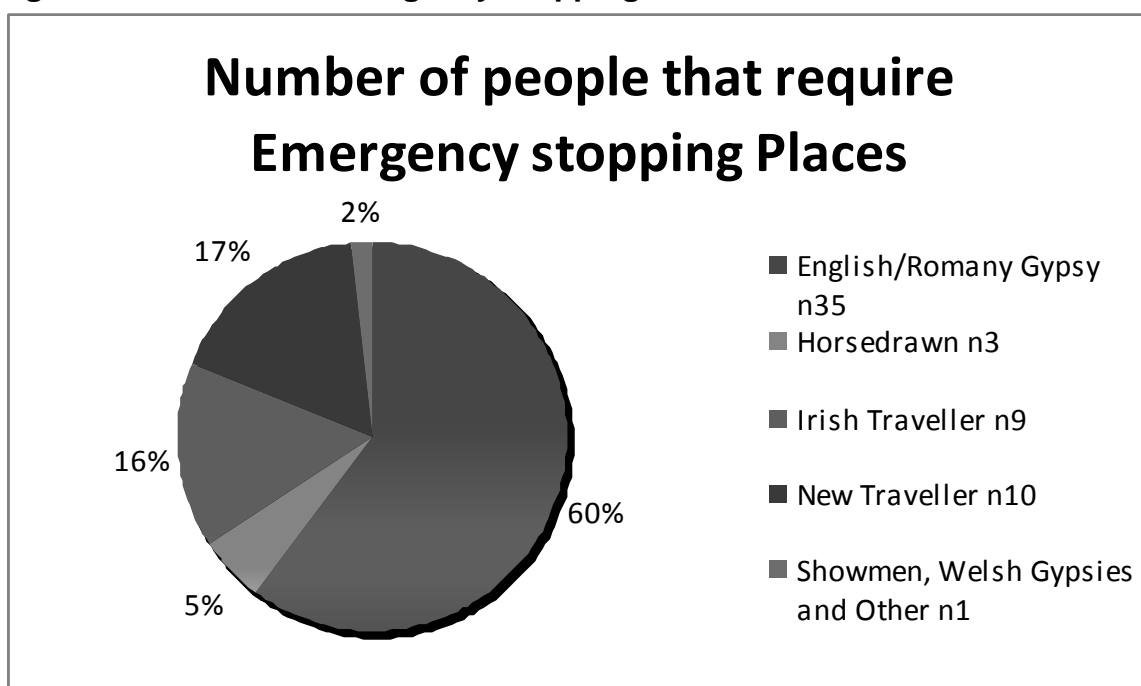
4.8.4 As stated earlier, some responses included 12 separate incidents of move on. The chart below is an example of some anonymised responses of the first section of patterns of move-on in individual's answers to the question. A snap-shot is shown below in Figure 4.8.3 by way of illustration.

**Figure 4.8.3 Snapshot illustration of incidences of move-on/eviction**

Evicted or Moved On?	From Where?	By Who?	When?	Where Next?
5 Evictions	Somerset and other counties	District councils	In the last 5 years	Wherever I could find another site
Evicted	Radstock	Council	2008	-
Evicted	Cinnamon Lane	Council	2005	West Hay
Evicted	Dunkerton	Council	Mar-06	-
Evicted	Green lane Glastonbury	Council	Dec-08	Roadside
Evicted	Bton BMX Track	Council	-	Stanmer Park
Evicted	Rented House	Landlord	2009	Current site
Evicted	Slough Green	Landlord	3 years ago	Here
Evicted	Clandown	Council	-	Quarry Frome
Evicted	Cornwall	Council	-	-
Evicted	Squat in Bristol	Court	Oct-08	Present
Evicted	Radstock	Farmer	Mar-03	Hunney
Evicted	Clandown	Council	Apr-08	Dead Woman's Bottom
Evicted	Clandown	Council		Dead woman's Bottom. Quarry Near Frome
Moved On	Shepton Mallet	Tenant Farmer	Jun-09	Green Lane nearby
Moved on	Shepton Mallet	-	2008/2009/2010	-
Moved on	Manchester	Council	6 months ago	Bristol
Moved On	Evesham	Police	Not Sure of dates	North Curry
Moved on	Bristol	Landowner	8/9 weeks ago	Yeovil
Moved on	Cinnamon Lane	Somerset CC	Sep-09	Moorlands

4.8.5 In response to a question asking whether emergency stopping places were required to meet accommodation needs, 69 people said yes. It is notable here (shown in figure 4.8.3 below) that although New Travellers seemed to be the most affected by eviction and move-on according to survey responses, this was not reflected in the answer to the question on whether emergency stopping places were required. In the next chapter (five) of the report, it will be shown that New Travellers and horse-drawn prefer not to stay on municipal 'official' sites, but would rather use traditional stopping places. This may account for this apparent disparity between incidents of eviction and need for emergency stopping sites.

**Figure 4.8.3 Need for Emergency Stopping Places**

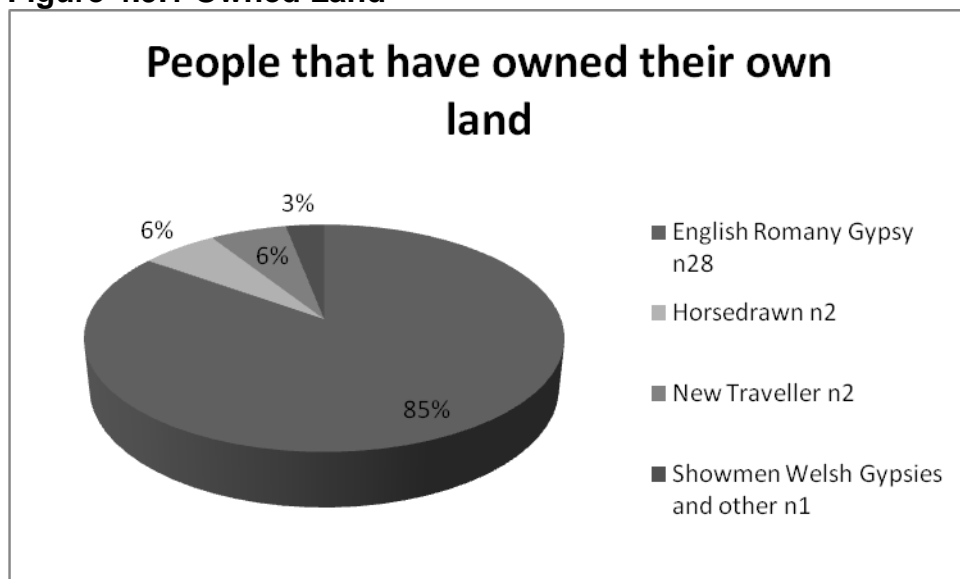


## 4.9 Planning and land ownership

4.9.1 In addition to patterns of short term travel and eviction, the research team wanted to understand more about the history of individuals' current accommodation. Questions were asked on land ownership and the following chart shows the number of people (stratified by group) who have owned their own land:



**Figure 4.9.1 Owned Land**



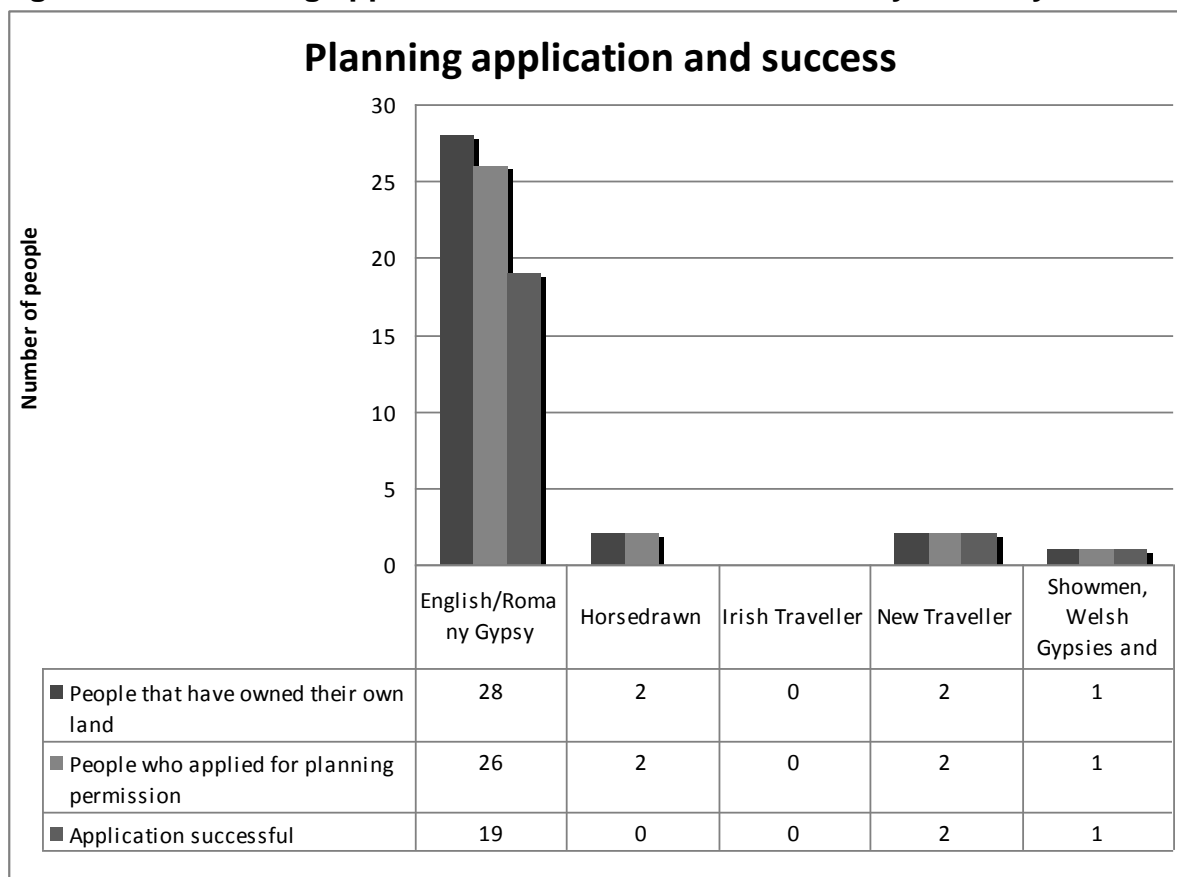
4.9.2 This shows overwhelmingly that it is the English/Romany Gypsy population who have owned their own land. Questions about affordability, ownership and renting are analysed in the next chapter (five) on future provision of sites. Related to land ownership was the question of planning permission which resulted in a very similar response as figure 4.9.1 demonstrating that the same people who had owned their own land had also applied for planning permission to develop a site.

4.9.3 Planning applications from Gypsies and Travellers nationally are not often successful. On the first attempt the success rate has been somewhere around 10% rising to nearer 35% when the application is looked at on appeal. Since the implementation of Circular 1/06 research has shown (Richardson, 2010<sup>38</sup>) that there has been an increase in the number of planning applications granted, but more of these are temporary permissions given in lieu of sufficient numbers of authorised sites.

4.9.4 The chart over the page at figure 4.9.2 shows the success of planning applications by ethnicity, and then the following chart (figure 4.9.3) stratifies planning decisions by district council.

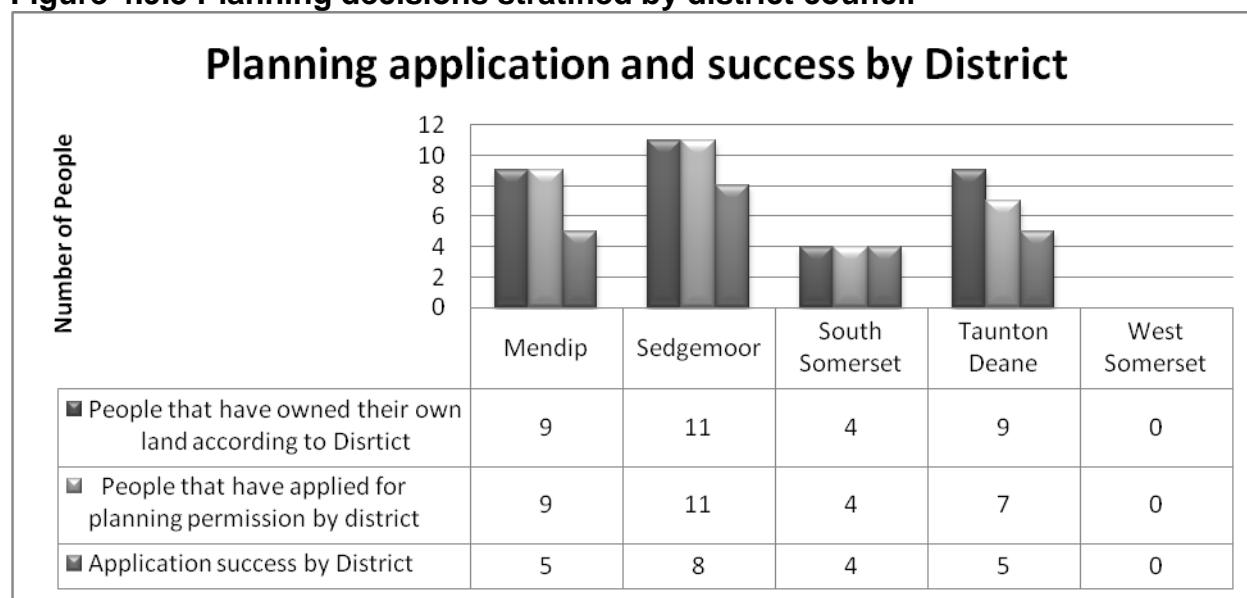
<sup>38</sup> Report prepared for the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group following national level analysis of planning appeals before and after Circular 1/06, Jo Richardson, February 2010.

**Figure 4.9.2 Planning applications and success stratified by ethnicity**



4.9.5 This shows an improved picture of planning success than the national picture in recent years; however over 30% of Gypsy planning applications are failing and that has an impact on current and future need.

**Figure 4.9.3 Planning decisions stratified by district council**



## **4.10 Conclusions**

4.10.1 A range of issues and responses have been considered in this chapter of the Somerset GTAA report and a series of recommendations have been made, particularly on disposal of sites and site management. These recommendations are brought together in the final chapter (thirteen) of this report.

## **5. FINDINGS: FUTURE PROVISION OF SITES**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 This chapter of the report focuses on perceptions and preferences for the future provision of sites. It begins with a reminder of the number of respondents that answered broadly 'yes' they were looking for accommodation, and then moves onto further detail on type of site and facilities.

### **5.2 Looking for Accommodation**

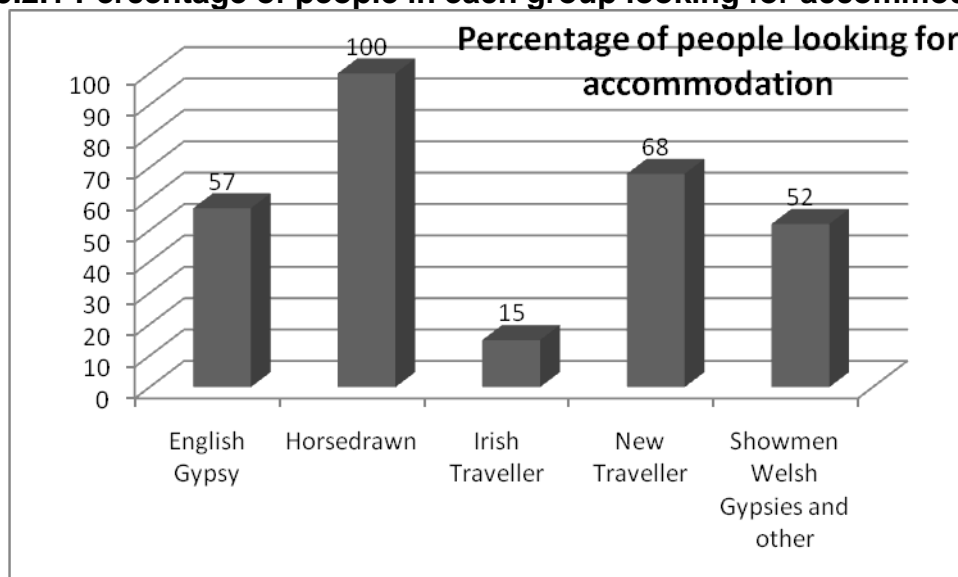
5.2.1 Eighty-two (82) respondents replied that yes, they were looking for accommodation. There were a variety of reasons for this ranging from a need for family members to stay, to being unhappy with existing accommodation and also requests to live on specific other sites. Some of the reasons for accommodation need are listed below, respondents also referred again to the type of accommodation that they would like in this question.

- The council say they have some land that may suit us but I don't trust them.
- Grand children all need somewhere to stay
- I need pitches for my married children
- Looking for a site and stopping places
- A different, less damp, better maintained flat (short term). Pitch for my Caravan long term.
- We want to buy our own land and apply for planning permission for 5 pitches
- Pitch for son about to get married
- We would like our own land
- A permanent pitch
- When I get married, I will need my own house or a piece of land to live on
- Hate this site. Mixed, Not happy site. Management don't help matters
- Need a place to park wagons and graze horses
- Need somewhere with grass for grazing to park wagon
- Always looking for grazing and places to stop
- Looking for park up for caravan and truck
- Council House
- In the long-term I want to buy land in Mendip
- Place with grazing and local work
- We would like to buy our own land
- My eldest daughter is looking for accommodation
- My mother, and sisters, cousins all need somewhere in Somerset
- Hopefully like to find land. Whether rent or buy for family and myself to be self sustaining
- Safe place to park up and eventually a house
- Somewhere to park up for 3 months
- Need a safe place to park my trailer
- My son and his girlfriend will be looking for their own house in the next 2 years

- Council flat/home nearby
- We have had enough of this site, It won't get any better now will it
- My sons are looking for pitches
- My son needs a pitch for his family
- A pitch for my daughter
- Extended family, have been forced into houses. Not happy
- I want a site where people know me. I need to know people before I trust them. If I know people I will feel safer

5.2.2 Looking at different community groups in turn on their reported need for accommodation, one can see proportionally the percentage of respondents in each group looking for accommodation.

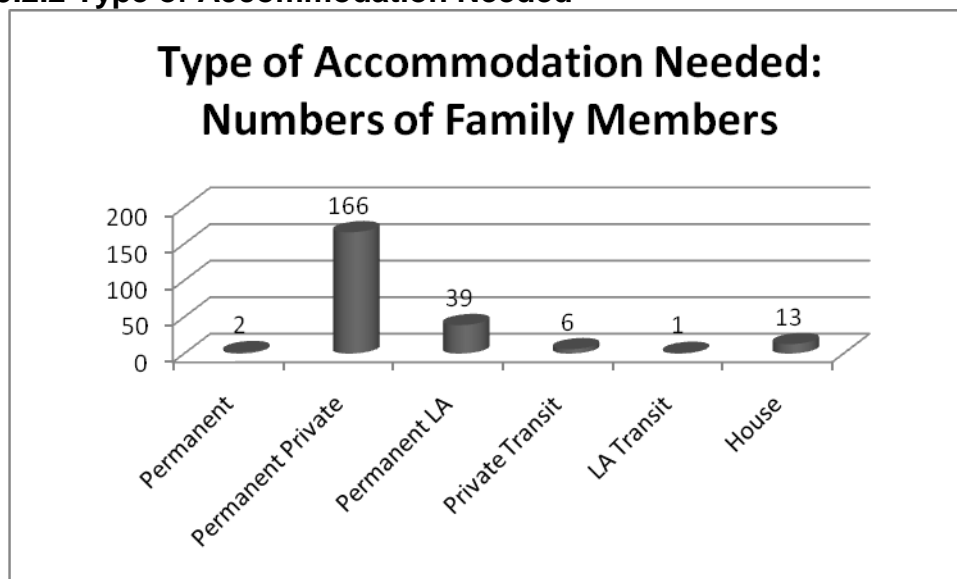
**Figure 5.2.1 Percentage of people in each group looking for accommodation**



5.2.3 When asked what attracted them to the area, respondents gave a wide variety of answers including family connections, always lived in the area, born and bred in Somerset, work, beauty of the area, access to health and education, festivals, never known anywhere else, peace and quiet.

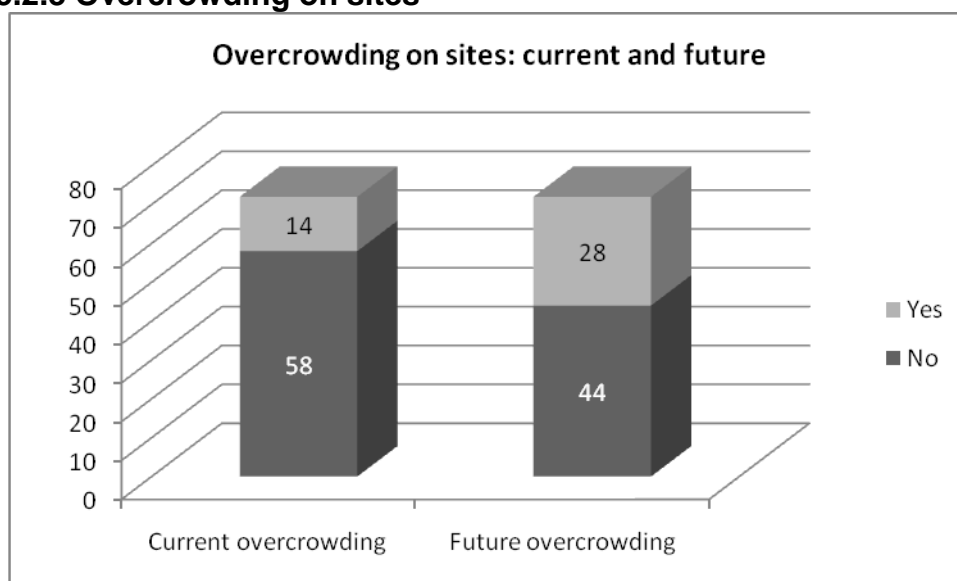
5.2.4 Respondents were asked about numbers of family members needing accommodation. One respondent replied '100s' (not included in chart data) and there were two responses of between 10 and 20, but most respondents thought about immediate relatives and suggested accommodation type preferences for family members who they felt were looking for accommodation.

**Figure 5.2.2 Type of Accommodation Needed**



5.2.5 One of the reasons given for needing accommodation was due to current and future possible overcrowding on site, due to changes in family such as children growing up and getting married.

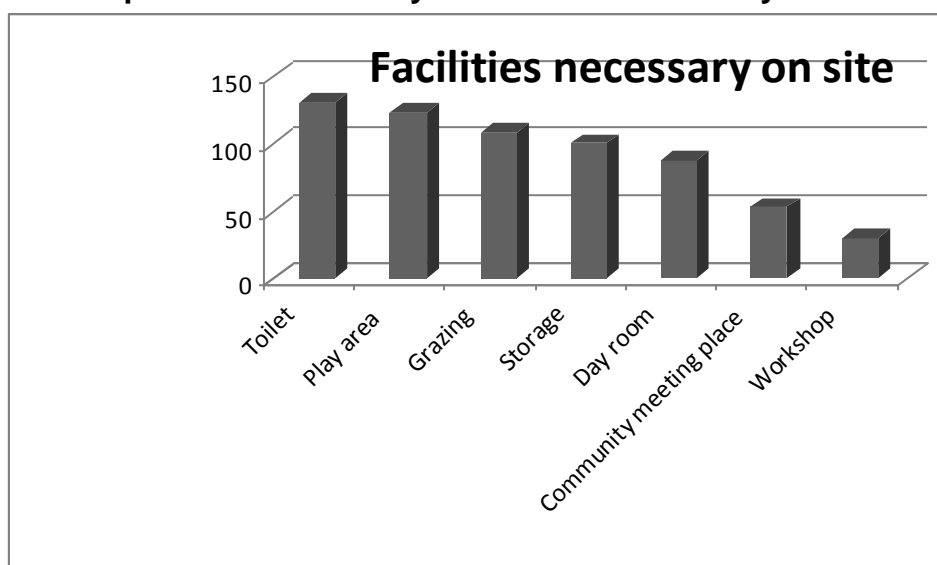
**Figure 5.2.3 Overcrowding on sites**



### 5.3 Facilities on Permanent Sites

5.3.1 When asked what facilities would be needed on longer term accommodation and sites, respondents provided a variety of answers but there were some common themes on the need for very basic facilities such as toilets, other responses included play areas and community meeting spaces. The chart at figure 5.3.1 shows 'votes' for suggested facilities necessary on site, so respondents did not choose just one or two facilities, they could have ticked that all facilities were necessary. However, the answers below show expectation of facilities on site are basic with 'toilet' being the most important, but following on from that also showing as a high priority is 'play area' for children.

**Figure 5.3.1 Responses from survey on facilities necessary on site**



5.3.2 There are no hard and fast rules on exactly what must be provided on sites, and the above responses show residents' preferences. For example not all sites will have play areas, and some sites have very small utility blocks in various states of repair. Councils will need to consult government guidance on site design <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/designinggypsysites.pdf>. for good practice on what facilities should be provided and what space standards should be used when building pitches.

**The research team recommends that proposed sites, and site plans, are consulted on widely in the community as a whole, and that potential site residents' views on what facilities are necessary and desirable, and what would be affordable, are established by district councils during this consultation period.**

### 5.4 Facilities on transit sites

5.4.1 Respondents were asked what facilities they would need on transit sites. The majority of responses to this question suggested a need for (1) toilets (2) water (3)

hard standing (4) electric hook up. There were also a number of people who suggested that the importance of horses to the lifestyle of Travellers should not be underestimated and that grazing facilities should be thought about in the provision of transit sites. Some respondents could not answer this question and there were some frustrated responses that once long term accommodation had been sorted for their family, then they may be able to think about travelling and transit sites. A small number, particularly New Travellers, referred to traditional stopping places and green lanes as a preference for 'transit' sites and it was noted in survey responses that these traditional places have been bunded up or had boulders placed in the access routes – and that traditional spaces have become more and more difficult to use over the years.

5.4.2 When asked for what period of time a transit site would be needed, the answers varied. Many said seasonally – and this seemed to relate to work which was again varied – some was related to festival work, but not all were in relation to this type of work. Others suggested that they just needed to stop for a couple of weeks, and this could be to visit family/friends – not just for work.

- Bit of hard standing with facilities or else safe space somewhere to use if needs arise
- Change the rules to let you stay on roadsides etc as long as you clean up after you, and not cause any problems
- Electric hook up, water, hard standing, wash house
- Hard standing, electricity, utility (7 responses like this)
- Hard standing, electricity, water, internet point day rooms, toilet facilities
- Parking
- Utility blocks, Hard standing, Grazing, Walking distance from shops
- Quiet places in the countryside to park up peacefully

5.4.3 There is such a variety of answers to the question on what facilities should be provided for transit accommodation, as can be seen above. Some wish for hard-standing 'official' sites and others prefer to use traditional stopping places. As such, there is no rule on a minimum standard of facilities that must be provided for a transit site. Again, the government site design guidance may be of help for councils; but the point made by Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset that in some cases they don't want sites provided, they want to be able to use traditional stopping places that have been used for hundreds of years historically, but which have been bunded up in recent times.

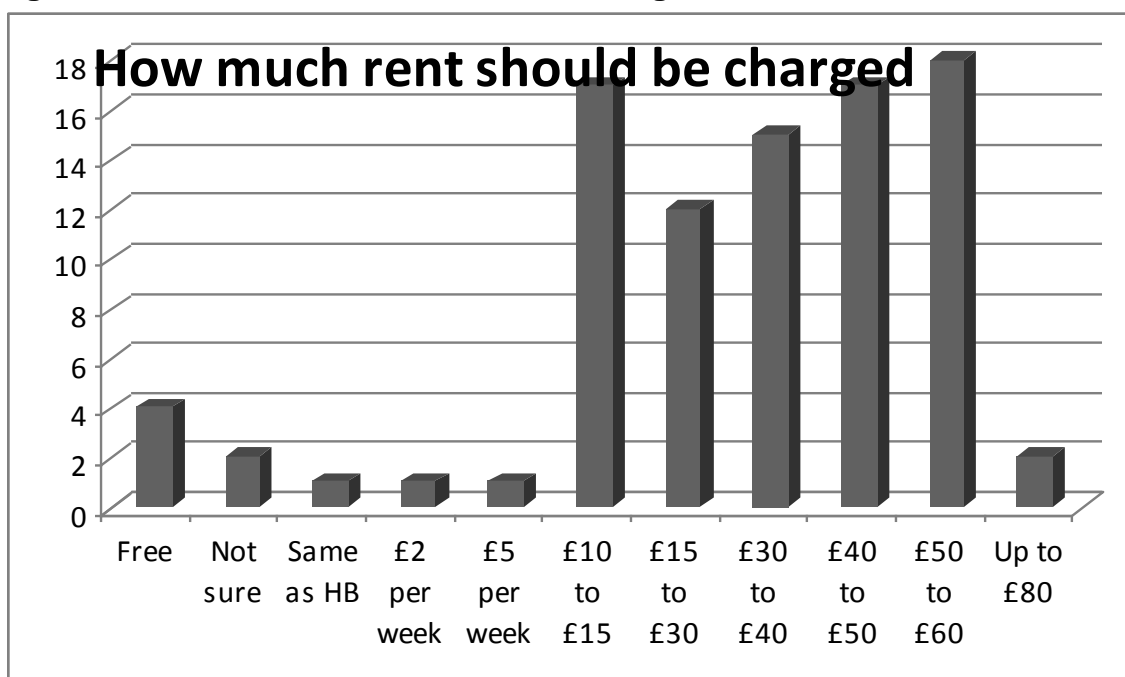
**The research team recommends that further research is undertaken by the district councils, in conjunction with the county and with people who have already collated data in this area (Tony Thomson), to establish where traditional stopping places have been bunded up, why this action has been taken, by whom, and then to ascertain whether any action could be taken by councils to facilitate opening up of these places for transit use, where appropriate.**



## 5.5 Affordability

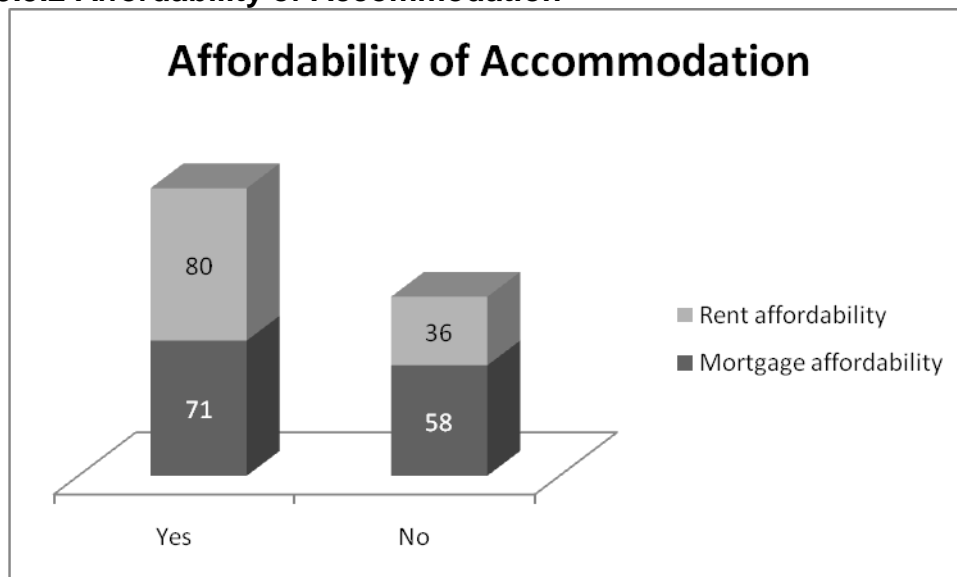
5.5.1 Finance is a private issue and so the question of affordability and how much rent should be charged is a challenging one. Most people answered the general question of affordability of sites, and then when asked a little more detail on what sort of rent should be charged there were 90 responses. The chart below captures the price brackets that 90 respondents suggested they could afford.

**Figure 5.5.1 How much rent should be charged?**



5.5.2 Respondents were also asked more generally on whether they thought they could afford rent or a mortgage. Detailed questions on income were not asked, but instead the focus was more on the respondent's perception on affordability.

**Figure 5.5.2 Affordability of Accommodation**



## 5.6 Site Location Preferences

5.6.1 The survey asked questions to ascertain location preferences for permanent sites. Respondents were asked what area they would prefer, and where they would like to be based. Some answers were general and respondents just wanted a place to stop anywhere, and there were many who just replied Somerset – however there were some responses with specific preferences, and some who suggested areas outside of the county. Some respondents suggested just one area, with others giving a couple of place names. Each mention of a place name in the two questions asking for area preference and where the respondent would like to be based are listed below:

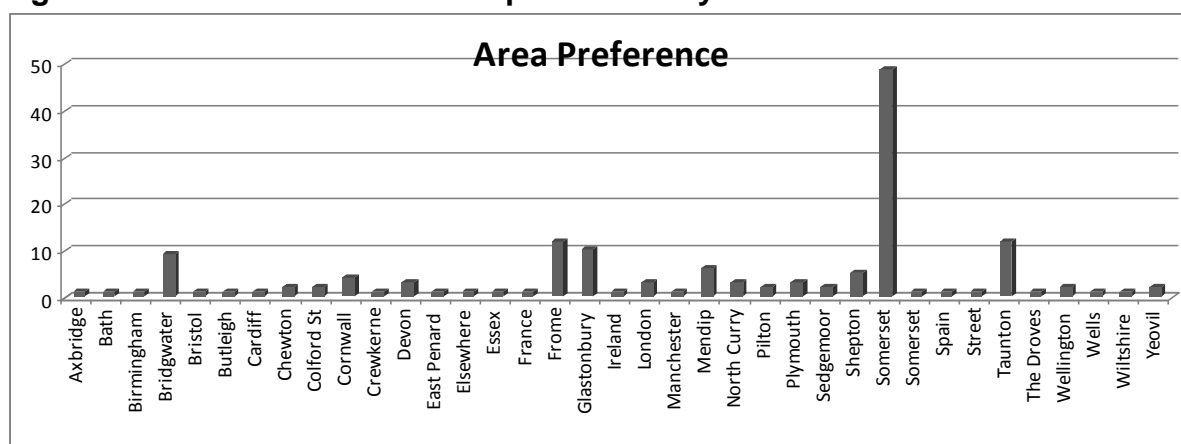
### Permanent site location preferences by mention

Axbridge – 1  
Bath – 1  
Birmingham – 1  
Bridgwater – 9  
Bristol – 1  
Butleigh – 1  
Cardiff – 1  
Chewton Mendip – 2  
Colford St Lukes – 2  
Cornwall – 4  
Crewkerne – 1  
Devon – 3  
East Penard – 1

Elsewhere – 1  
Essex – 1  
France – 1  
Frome – 12  
Glastonbury – 10  
Ireland – 1  
London – 3  
Manchester – 1  
Mendip – 6  
North Curry – 3  
Pilton – 2  
Plymouth – 3  
Sedgemoor – 2  
Shepton Mallett – 5  
Somerset – 49  
Somerset Levels – 1  
Spain – 1  
Street – 1  
Taunton – 12  
The Doves – 1  
Wellington – 2  
Wells – 1  
Wiltshire – 1  
Yeovil – 2

5.6.2 However, we can see at a glance, how many respondents just said ‘Somerset’ because they just wanted accommodation anywhere in the county and felt unable to choose a specific area as they wanted to be allowed to just settle somewhere.

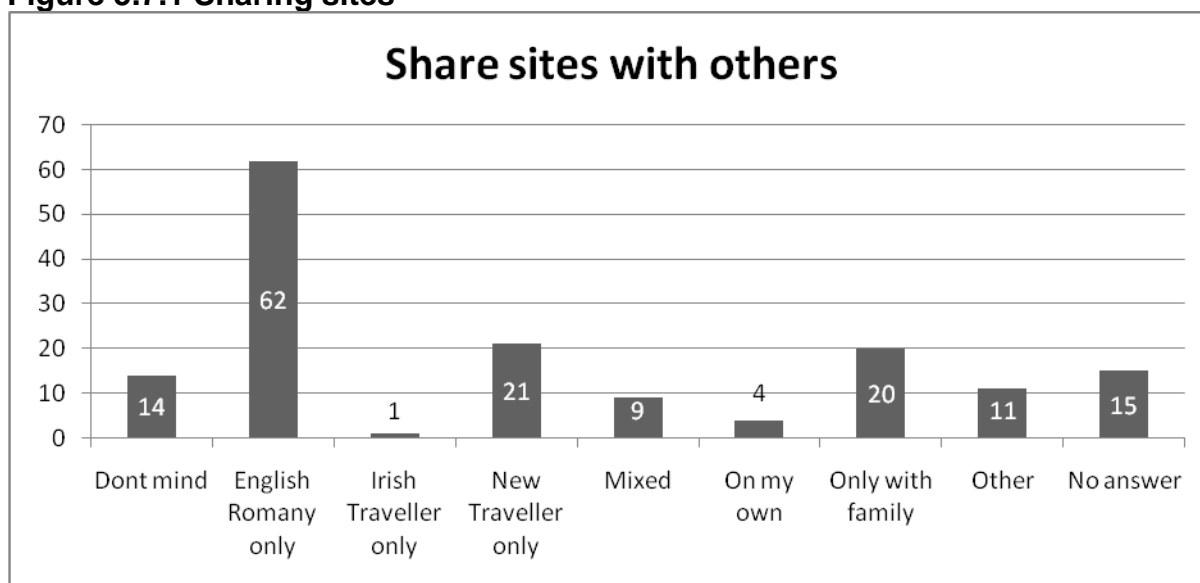
**Figure 5.6.1 Permanent Site area preference by mention**



## 5.7 Mixed sites

5.7.1 Respondents were also asked whether they thought shared/mixed sites were a good idea and whether they would consider living on them. The chart below stratifies the 157 surveys according to respondents' views. One can see that mixed sites are not a popular choice and there seems to be a preference to living with families from a similar cultural heritage.

**Figure 5.7.1 Sharing sites**



## 5.8 Where should transit sites be?

5.8.1 The survey asked respondents where they would like transit sites to be placed. There are a range of places mentioned, and some mention existing places, perhaps because they have tried to access a specific pitch or site. There are also locations outside of the county which are listed and mapped over the page.



- On all the illegally blocked green lanes, by ways, bridle ways and traditional stopping places, agricultural land, green belt land, development land, neglected
- industrial estates, unused army camps and common land
- Glastonbury
- Shepton Mallet, Glastonbury, Street, Frome, Nunny, Mells, Wells
- Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Taunton, Yeovil, Ilminster, Wincanton
- 1 in Yeovil, 1 in Taunton, 1 in Bath
- Frome. Easy access to Bristol and Bath. In the countryside near easy access roads
- Prefer hard standing not disturbing local residents. Not near busy roads and all over the place.
- Unblock the old traditional stopping places. Many have been bouldered. Sites need to be placed by a major road with reasonable access to local services.
- Weston Zoyland and near Glastonbury and Taunton
- Within cycling distance from shops
- For fairs and work. Each county
- All over (7 more responses like this)
- Any rural in Somerset. Away from the towns, not polluted land
- Everywhere in town on droves and green lanes (4 more responses like this)
- Everywhere! Close to local towns and villages but private space away from others
- Near Taunton, Glastonbury, Frome and Yeovil
- We like to stop out in the countryside near main roads. Not close to towns or villages
- Throughout Somerset and the rest of the country
- There are housing estates in most towns, so why not Transit sites?
- The circuits between towns where there have been stopping places for centuries
- Open countryside
- One in every town, just like council estates
- On Traveller road routes, on or near main roads (11 more comments were like this)
- On the outskirts of every town in the SW England
- Near the big towns
- In bigger towns, so work would be easier to access
- Near the motorways so they can be easily accessed

5.8.4 When asked whether residential and transit pitches should be provided together on sites, responses were fairly evenly divided, 73 said no, 63 replies yes and 21 had no answer on this question. Some respondents qualified their 'yes' answer with 'as long as the site is well managed'. In speaking to residents on one of the council sites (Taunton) there were concerns about the patch of land at the top of the site being used for transit pitches following one particular person who stopped there committing anti-social behaviour and causing a nuisance.

The responses from Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset, on the facilities/locations preferred for transit sites, varies a great deal. In the mentions earlier on in this subsection, there was just one request for hard-standing, with many others mentioning open countryside, outskirts of every town, droves and green lanes.

**The research team recommends that the councils do not just look at pitch requirements for transit accommodation and think in terms of concrete municipal pitches, but instead consults with appropriate landowners and agencies on a mixed range of options for transit site provision for the future.**

## 5.9 Traditional Stopping Places

5.9.1 Some of the comments in responses listed above show that Gypsies and Travellers prefer to stop in the open countryside and on traditional stopping places. Work undertaken by Tony Thomson (see further [www.albionwayfarer.com](http://www.albionwayfarer.com)) investigates the closure of these traditional sites over the years and provides photographs to evidence; for example:



An interactive map of traditional stopping places is included on the website [www.albionwayfarer.com](http://www.albionwayfarer.com)

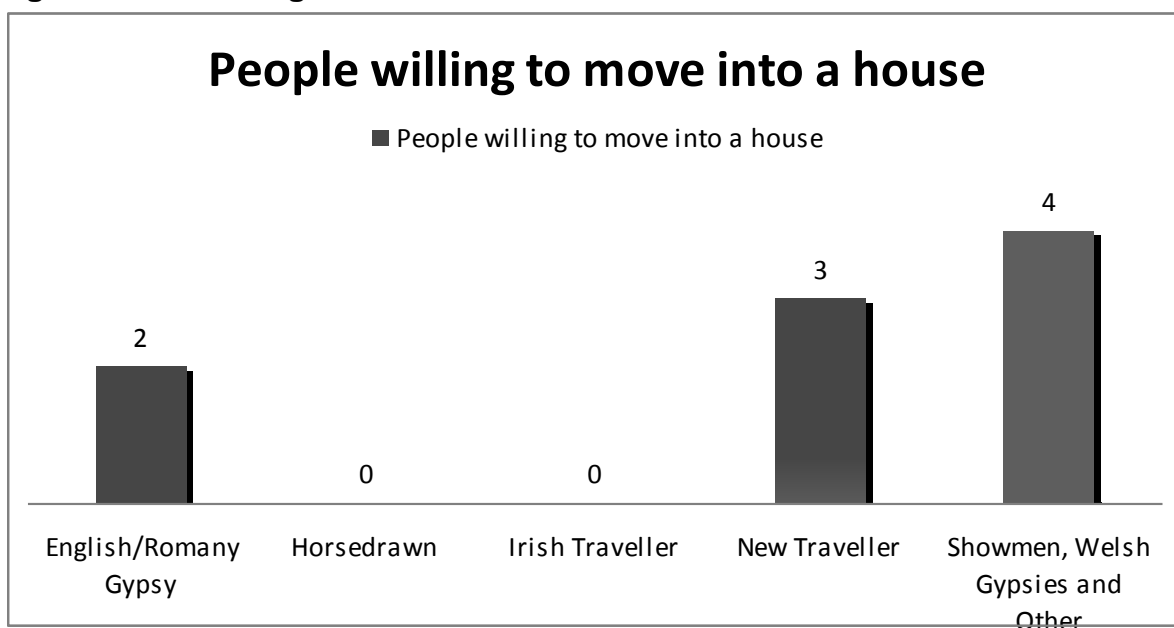
5.9.2 During a site visit by a member of the project team to one of the New Travellers sites in Mendip, one Traveller talked about her experience of travelling all over the world and she made references to stopping places in other European countries like Belgium. She said that when going from place to place there was a site near every large town with electricity and water – it didn't matter who you were, tourist on holiday or Traveller, anyone could pull up without too much bother and hook up to

basic essential services. It was suggested that this kind of model should be used in England too.

## 5.10 Consideration of moving into housing

5.10.1 Whilst many Gypsies and Travellers have an aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation, the survey did ask respondents if their preference might be to move into a house or flat. There were not many affirmative responses, but they are shown in the chart below.

**Figure 5.10.1 Willingness to move to a house**



## 5.11 Management of future sites

5.11.1 The survey asked Gypsies and Travellers whether they would be willing or interested to manage permanent and transit sites themselves. The chart over the page, at figure 5.11.1 shows some willingness to manage sites with friends and families, but less interest in sharing in the management of a network of transit sites.



Figure 5.11.1 Willingness to manage sites

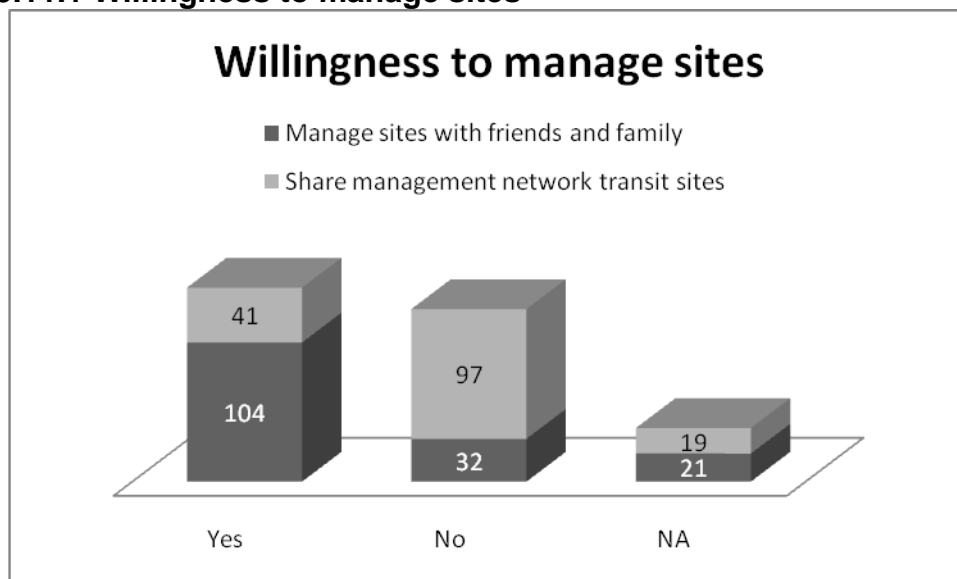
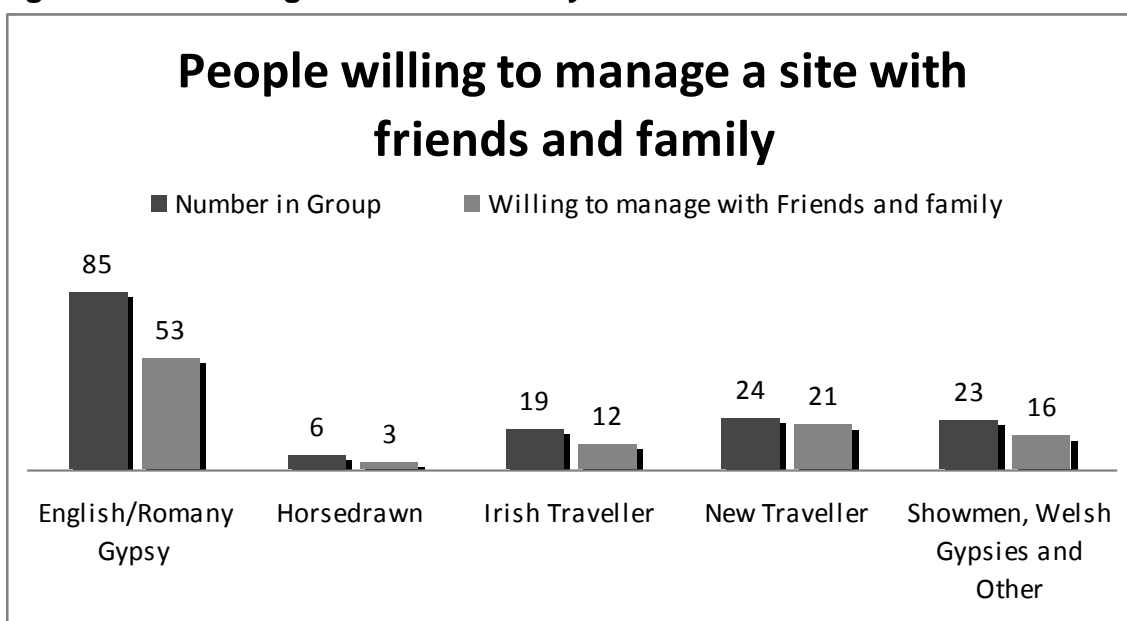
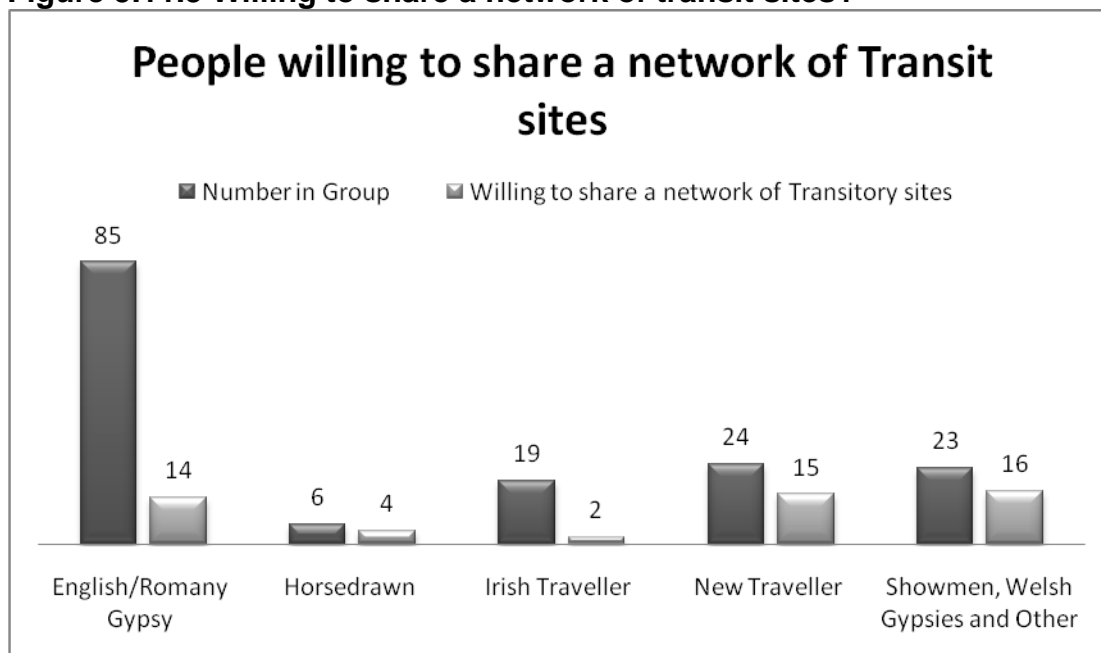


Figure 5.11.2 Manage a site with family and friends



**Figure 5.11.3 Willing to share a network of transit sites?**



5.11.2 It must be noted here that the nature of the survey, whilst it aimed to have a selection of open ended questions, did include tick box questions. The point has been made by a representative from Friends Families and Travellers that the process of asking set questions, to understand travelling needs, expected Travellers to translate informal, customary practices into formal institutional structures, and this may explain the difficulty that some respondents had in asking such questions, and indeed the reticence to commit to sharing fixed or transitory sites with unspecified, unknown people.

## 5.12 Ideal site

5.12.1 Respondents struggled to answer these questions, especially those who were on the roadside and being moved on. They could not focus on necessary facilities on their ideal site – they just wanted a place to stop without being evicted. However, with some prompting and some pre-set suggestions, respondents were able to start to think about necessities on a site. These mentions of necessary facilities are shown in a previous section 5.6 in figure 5.6.1. A small number of respondents offered ideas beyond basic facilities which included:

- Grass
- Garden Trees/wood
- Composting toilet
- Vegetable patch
- Broadband connection

5.12.2 Young people in a focus group were asked to note down the features of their 'perfect' site and two diagrams below show some key ideas:

Figure 5.12.1 Young People Ideal Site diagram 1

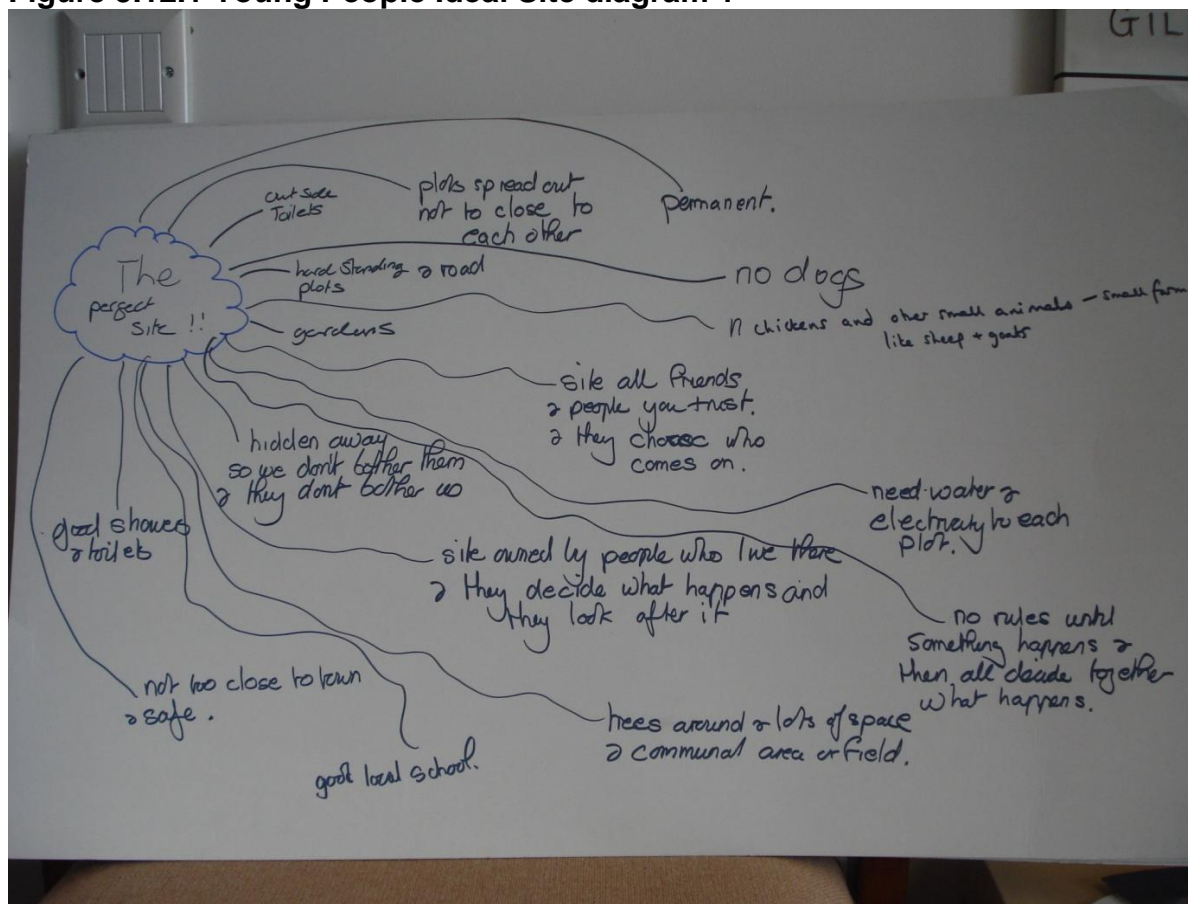
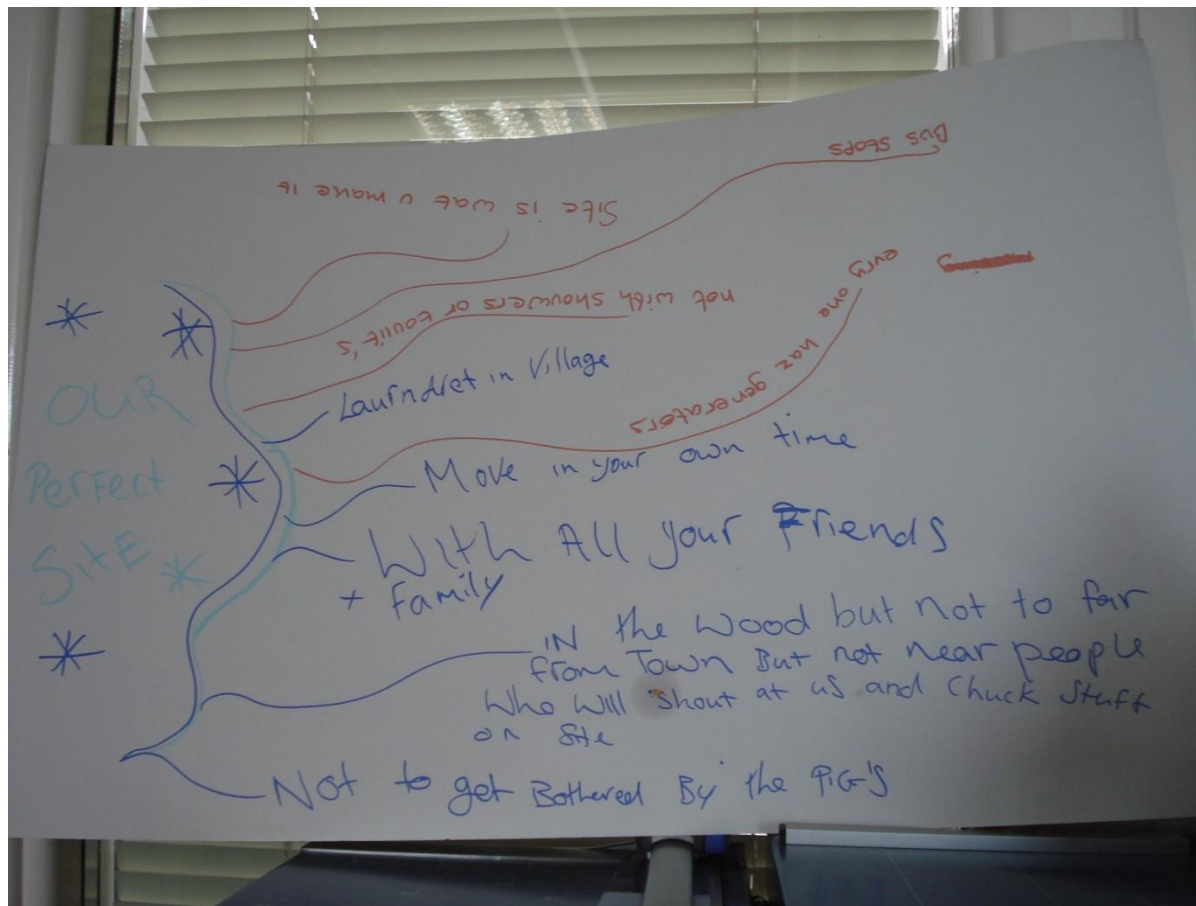
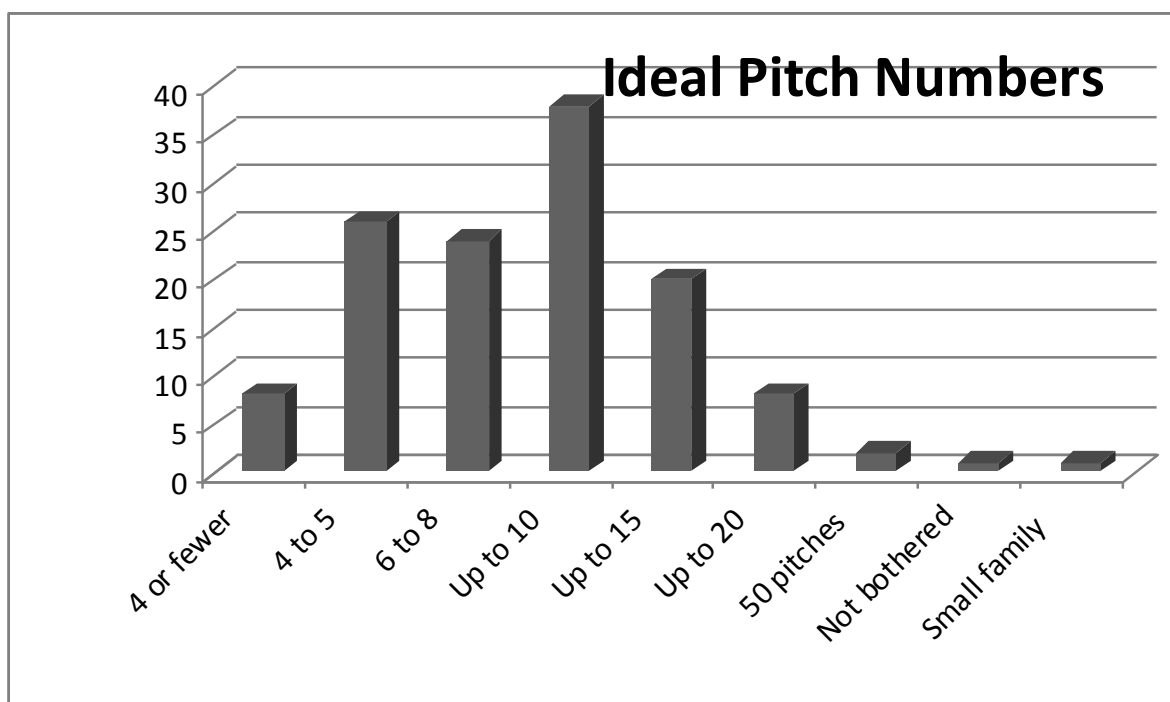


Figure 5.12.2 Young people ideal site diagram 2



5.12.3 It is often said that Gypsies and Travellers prefer to have smaller, family-run private sites and so the survey team wanted to test this by asking respondents what their ideal number of pitches on a site would be, to see whether smaller sites really were the favourite. The chart below confirms this preference with many saying they would prefer a site with 10 or fewer pitches and only a couple of respondents talking about sites heading towards 15 or 20 pitches.

**Figure 5.12.3 Ideal number of pitches on sites**



**The research team reiterates its earlier recommendation that district councils consult widely at the stage when potential sites are proposed, so that preferences on facilities, design and pitch numbers can be taken into account.**

## **6. Analysis of Pitch Requirement across Somerset up to 2015**

### **6.1 Introduction**

6.1.1 The calculation of pitch requirements for this study is based on the methodology which appears in the CLG guidance on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments. The calculation draw on secondary information about the Gypsy and Traveller population and provision; survey data; and reasoned assumptions made in order to interpret the survey findings and make the pitch requirement estimates realistic. These assumptions are in line with the professional experience of the Study Team and approaches taken in similar studies elsewhere. The assumptions used are made transparent as they are set out in full this section.

6.1.2 Separate calculations are undertaken for:

- Residential pitch requirements for Gypsies and Travellers 2010 – 2015 and 2015 – 2020
- Transit pitch requirements for Gypsies and Travellers 2010 – 2015 and 2015 – 2020
- Residential pitch requirements for Travelling Showpeople for the period 2010 – 2015 and 2015 – 2020

In line with CLG guidance and the client brief this study includes the housing requirements of housed Travellers. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments Guidance, (CLG 2007) states that studies should include “Bricks and mortar dwelling households whose existing accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable (‘unsuitable’ in this context can include unsuitability by virtue of proven psychological aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation) (Paragraph 15, page 8)”. These needs contribute to pitch requirements for sites. GLG guidance adds that local authorities will wish to satisfy themselves that this aversion is of sufficient severity to constitute a need rather than a preference.

6.1.3 The Study Team has applied assumptions to the interpretation of survey and secondary data. We have not applied raw data from survey responses directly and, in order not to skew the assessment of pitch requirements based on aspirational responses, we have adjusted survey findings to reflect our professional opinion on what is likely to happen. These assumptions are spelt out in detail within our calculations at Appendix A. They are in line with the approach set out within published guidance, other studies and are drawn from our professional experience. These assumptions are designed to eliminate double counting and inclusion of aspirational responses and to produce a set of estimates that are robust and reflect what practitioners would reasonably expect is likely to happen.

- 6.1.4 The GTAA methodology requires a number of calculations to be undertaken which draw upon an estimate of the Gypsy and Traveller population as a whole. In the absence of any definitive data the study team has utilised the CLG Caravan Count, data on local authority sites, Traveller Education Service data and information provide by partner authorities in order to develop the estimate set out at Table 6.1. This relates to the residential Gypsy and Traveller population, that is those that normally live in the area. The number of household shown as living in encampments only relates to the residential component of that population, which are those that are seeking accommodation that they have a right to occupy in the study area.

**Table 6.1 Estimate of the number of households in the Residential Gypsy and Traveller Population in Study Area**

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
Authorised Sites	72	26	31	90	10	228
Unauthorised Sites	28	11	4	7	0	50
Encampments	28	0	1	0	0	30
Housed	67	42	41	23	16	189
All	195	79	77	120	26	497
	39.2%	15.8%	15.5%	24.2%	5.3%	100.0%

## 6.2 Residential Pitch Requirements 2010 – 15

- 6.2.1 Table 6.2 sets out the calculation of pitch requirements for 2010 – 15 across the area covered by Somerset County Council including all the five district authorities that are partners in this study. This table is supported by notes explaining how each element of the calculation has been determined. Where assumptions are made these reflect the experience of those working with Gypsies and Travellers in the study area and the assessment of the research team. This suggests that there is a need for 131 pitches in the period 2010 – 15.
- 6.2.2 The publication Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide (CLG, 2008) states that “there is no one-size-fits-all measurement of a pitch as, in the case of the settled community, this depends on the size of individual families and their particular needs” (Paragraph 7.9, page 40). It adds, however, that “as a general guide, it is possible to specify that an average family pitch must be capable of accommodating an amenity building, a large trailer and touring caravan, (or two trailers, drying space for clothes, a lockable shed (for bicycles, wheelchair storage etc), parking space for two vehicles and a small garden area. Smaller pitches must be able to accommodate at least an amenity building, a large trailer, drying space for clothes and parking for at least one vehicle)” (Paragraph 7.12 – 7.13 pages 40 – 41). This guidance provides detailed information on site location, layout, access and orientation, site services and facilities and health, safety and accessibility.

- 6.2.3 A full explanation of the elements in the calculation is set out in Appendix A. This provides a robust methodology to determine additional need for residential pitches which avoids 'double counting' and the assessment of need being inflated by aspirational responses. In order to provide a methodology which is transparent and can be replicated, the steps are set in full and are necessarily complex. Due to rounding there is a difference between rows and columns such that the 2010 – 15 pitch requirement across the study area as a whole and the total of all districts combined differs by 1.

<b>Table 6.2 Calculation of Residential Pitch Requirements 2010 – 2015 in the Somerset Study Area.</b>	
Element in the calculation:	<b>Pitches/families</b>
<b>Current residential supply</b>	
1. Socially rented pitches January 2010	84
2. Pitches on private authorised sites January 2010	145
3. Total pitches/households January 2010 (rows 1+2)	229
<b>Additional need in July 2010 and arising 2010- 2015</b>	
4. Overcrowding on LA sites January 2010	0
5. Net movement from housing to sites 2010-2015	12
6. Unauthorised development January 2010	50
7. Unauthorised encampment 2010-2015	15
8. End of temporary permissions 2010-2015	12
9. New household formation 2010-2015	69
10. Additional need 2010-2015 (rows 4 – 9)	158
<b>Additional supply 2010-2015</b>	
11. LA pitches not utilised January 2010	3
12. Authorised pitches undeveloped January 2010	0
13. Planning applications pending January 2010	0
14. New pitches planned January 2010	3
15. Vacancies on socially rented sites 2010-2015	21
16. Additional Supply 2010-2015 (rows 11 – 15)	27
<b>Additional residential pitch requirements</b>	
17. Requirement for extra residential pitches 2010-2015	<b>131</b>

### 6.3 Residential Pitch Requirements 2015 – 2020

- 6.3.1 CLG guidance and the brief agreed with the partner authorities are to provide an estimate of need over the following five year period to 2020. This is more problematic than for 2010 – 2015 since there may be significant changes in the population, lifestyles and preferences for location and accommodation types. There are also expected to be policy impacts arising from changes in



provision, planning consent and enforcement, the management of unauthorised encampments and legislative changes. Our estimates for 2015 – 2020 do not take any such factors into account. They draw upon the findings for 2015 - 20 and have applied a less detailed approach based simply on estimated household growth.

6.3.2 The results are set out in Table 6.3 and are based on the following assumptions:

- The number of pitches will be based as in 2010 with the addition of the pitches required in 2010 – 15 as set out in Table 6.2
- The number of the housed Gypsy and Traveller population in the period 2010 – 2015 is assumed to be constant across the study area
- The assumed rate of household growth in 2015 – 2020 is 3% per annum compound as used in the illustration in CLG guidance
- That the need for sites amongst new households on sites is in line with the preferences and assumptions applied in calculation of the 2010 -15 requirement
- That the need for sites amongst those in new households in houses is in line with preferences and assumptions applied in calculation of the 2010 - 15 requirement

6.3.3 The calculation shows a requirement for 58 additional pitches across the study area in 2015 – 2020. In the tables 6.4 – 6.7, which show pitch requirements by district, we have distributed this requirement on the basis of need where it arises.

<b>Table 6.3 Calculation of Residential Pitch Requirements 2015 – 2020 in the Somerset Study Area.</b>	
Element in the calculation:	<b>Pitches/ families</b>
<b>Baseline</b>	
Housed	189
Authorised Pitches 2010	229
Pitches added 2010 - 15	131
<b>Additional households formed 2015 - 20</b>	
From amongst housed families	30
From amongst families on sites	57
<b>Pitch requirements 2015 - 20</b>	
From housed families	10
From families on sites	54
<b>Total requirement 2015 – 20</b>	
Requirement for extra residential pitches 2015-2020	<b>64</b>

## **6.4 Pitch Requirements at Local Planning Authority level**

- 6.4.1 Tables 6.4 – 6.8 apply the GTAA methodology at district council level, these being the local planning authorities who draw up development plan documents that include policies and land allocations relating to the provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers. Table 6.12 summaries these requirements across the study area. In some tables columns and rows do not balance due to rounding.
- 6.4.2 In guidance issued following abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies the Secretary of State has advised local planning authorities to have regard to evidence of such need when drawing up local plans. Decision making on planning matters is bound by public law principles requiring all relevant matters to be taken into consideration including evidence of need. The methodology used applies data on need at district level and draws upon the survey findings of this study. The resultant pitch calculations therefore reflect need where it arises following the existing distribution within the study area and reinforce existing settlement patterns. In practice determination of where need should be met involves a range of factors including capacity, resources, sustainability and policy choice around equity. No recommendations are made as to whether this need can best be met through the development of new sites or expansion of existing ones. These are policy choices having regard to CLG guidance and management considerations of optimum size. There may also be scope for authorities to work together to best meet need through shared provision and the planning of site allocations across the study area. There are elements of the calculation which take into account need arising from occupants who will have previously been outside of the Study Area such as those in unauthorised encampments. In respect of these, the residential pitch requirement calculation only takes into account those who are estimated to give rise to the need for a residential site in the Study Area. No separate allowance has been made for new households likely to arrive from elsewhere as, in line with other studies and practice of the Study Team, we have assumed that this can be expected to be balanced by pitches that become available when existing households move out of the study area. The need for transit provision has been calculated separately.

**Table 6.4 Calculation of Pitch Residential Requirements 2010- 2020 in Mendip District Council**

Element in the calculation:	Pitches/ families
<b>Current residential supply</b>	
1. Socially rented pitches January 2010	23
2. Pitches on private authorised sites January 2010	49
3. Total pitches/households January 2010 (rows 1+2)	72
<b>Additional need in July 2010 and arising 2010- 2015</b>	
4. Overcrowding on LA sites January 2010	0
5. Net movement from housing to sites 2010-2015	4
6. Unauthorised development January 2010	28
7. Unauthorised encampment 2010-2015	14
8. End of temporary permissions 2010-2015	4
9. New household formation 2010-2015	25
10. Additional need 2010-2015 (rows 4 – 9)	75
<b>Additional supply 2010-2015</b>	
11. LA pitches not utilised January 2010	0
12. Authorised pitches undeveloped January 2010	0
13. Planning applications pending January 2010	0
14. New pitches planned January 2010	0
15. Vacancies on socially rented sites 2010-2015	6
16. Additional Supply 2010-2015 (rows 11 – 15)	6
<b>Additional residential pitch requirements</b>	
17. Extra residential pitches required 2010-15 (row 10 – 16)	69
18. Extra residential pitches required 2015-20	24
19. Extra residential pitches required 2010-20 (row 17 + 18)	<b>93</b>

**Table 6.5 Calculation of Pitch Residential Requirements 2010- 2020 in Sedgemoor District Council**

Element in the calculation:	Pitches/ families
<b>Current residential supply</b>	
1. Socially rented pitches January 2010	8
2. Pitches on private authorised sites January 2010	18
3. Total pitches/households January 2010 (rows 1+2)	26
<b>Additional need in July 2010 and arising 2010- 2015</b>	
4. Overcrowding on LA sites January 2010	0
5. Net movement from housing to sites 2010-2015	2
6. Unauthorised development January 2010	11
7. Unauthorised encampment 2010-2015	0
8. End of temporary permissions 2010-2015	2
9. New household formation 2010-2015	11
10. Additional need 2010-2015 (rows 4 – 9)	26
<b>Additional supply 2010-2015</b>	
11. LA pitches not utilised January 2010	0
12. Authorised pitches undeveloped January 2010	0
13. Planning applications pending January 2010	0
14. New pitches planned January 2010	0
15. Vacancies on socially rented sites 2010-2015	2
16. Additional Supply 2010-2015 (rows 11 – 15)	2
<b>Additional residential pitch requirements</b>	
17. Extra residential pitches required 2010-15 (row 10 – 16)	24
18. Extra residential pitches required 2015-20	10
19. Extra residential pitches required 2010-20 (row 17 + 18)	<b>34</b>

**Table 6.6 Calculation of Pitch Residential Requirements 2010- 2020 in South Somerset District Council**

Element in the calculation:	Pitches/ families
<b>Current residential supply</b>	
1. Socially rented pitches January 2010	20
2. Pitches on private authorised sites January 2010	11
3. Total pitches/households January 2010 (rows 1+2)	31
<b>Additional need in July 2010 and arising 2010- 2015</b>	
4. Overcrowding on LA sites January 2010	0
5. Net movement from housing to sites 2010-2015	2
6. Unauthorised development January 2010	4
7. Unauthorised encampment 2010-2015	1
8. End of temporary permissions 2010-2015	0
9. New household formation 2010-2015	11
10. Additional need 2010-2015 (rows 4 – 9)	18
<b>Additional supply 2010-2015</b>	
11. LA pitches not utilised January 2010	0
12. Authorised pitches undeveloped January 2010	0
13. Planning applications pending January 2010	0
14. New pitches planned January 2010	3
15. Vacancies on socially rented sites 2010-2015	5
16. Additional Supply 2010-2015 (rows 11 – 15)	8
<b>Additional residential pitch requirements</b>	
17. Extra residential pitches required 2010-15 (row 10 – 16)	10
18. Extra residential pitches required 2015-20	8
19. Extra residential pitches required 2010-20 (row 17 + 18)	<b>18</b>

**Table 6.7 Calculation of Pitch Residential Requirements 2010- 2020 in Taunton Deane Borough Council**

Element in the calculation:	Pitches/ families
<b>Current residential supply</b>	
1. Socially rented pitches January 2010	23
2. Pitches on private authorised sites January 2010	67
3. Total pitches/households January 2010 (rows 1+2)	90
<b>Additional need in July 2010 and arising 2010- 2015</b>	
4. Overcrowding on LA sites January 2010	0
5. Net movement from housing to sites 2010-2015	3
6. Unauthorised development January 2010	7
7. Unauthorised encampment 2010-2015	0
8. End of temporary permissions 2010-2015	6
9. New household formation 2010-2015	18
10. Additional need 2010-2015 (rows 4 – 9)	34
<b>Additional supply 2010-2015</b>	
11. LA pitches not utilised January 2010	3
12. Authorised pitches undeveloped January 2010	0
13. Planning applications pending January 2010	0
14. New pitches planned January 2010	0
15. Vacancies on socially rented sites 2010-2015	6
16. Additional Supply 2010-2015 (rows 11 – 15)	9
<b>Additional residential pitch requirements</b>	
17. Extra residential pitches required 2010-15 (row 10 – 16)	25
18. Extra residential pitches required 2015-20	19
19. Extra residential pitches required 2010-20 (row 17 + 18)	<b>44</b>

**Table 6.8 Calculation of Pitch Residential Requirements 2010- 2020 in West Somerset District Council**

Element in the calculation:	Pitches/ families
<b>Current residential supply</b>	
1. Socially rented pitches January 2010	10
2. Pitches on private authorised sites January 2010	0
3. Total pitches/households January 2010 (rows 1+2)	10
<b>Additional need in July 2010 and arising 2010- 2015</b>	
4. Overcrowding on LA sites January 2010	0
5. Net movement from housing to sites 2010-2015	1
6. Unauthorised development January 2010	0
7. Unauthorised encampment 2010-2015	0
8. End of temporary permissions 2010-2015	0
9. New household formation 2010-2015	4
10. Additional need 2010-2015 (rows 4 – 9)	5
<b>Additional supply 2010-2015</b>	
11. LA pitches not utilised January 2010	0
12. Authorised pitches undeveloped January 2010	0
13. Planning applications pending January 2010	0
14. New pitches planned January 2010	0
15. Vacancies on socially rented sites 2010-2015	3
16. Additional Supply 2010-2015 (rows 11 – 15)	3
<b>Additional residential pitch requirements</b>	
17. Extra residential pitches required 2010-15 (row 10 – 16)	2
18. Extra residential pitches required 2015-20	3
19. Extra residential pitches required 2010-20 (row 17 + 18)	5

## 6.5 Movement between the study area and elsewhere

6.5.1 In common with a number of other Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments, an allowance for net movement between the study area and 'elsewhere' has not been incorporated into the calculations made in the tables above. This approach is based on the commonly held research assumption that households arriving from elsewhere will be balanced by pitches becoming vacant and current Somerset encampments relocating when families move on. This assumption is sensitive to instances where there is a change in the level and nature of travelling patterns over time.

## **6.6 Transit Accommodation Requirements**

- 6.6.1 Gypsies and Travellers have a lifestyle and cultural tradition of travelling and transit and stopping places can facilitate this. As traditional stopping places become blocked off greater disruption is likely to arise from unauthorised encampments which are forced onto more sensitive locations. Blocking off results from ditching, gating and bouldering of places which has been perceived as being increasingly systematic and frequent since the passage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which increased powers to evict Travellers camping illegally. The brief for this study seeks quantification of the need for transit sites. This provision can include local authority provision with hard standing areas or less formal stopping places on both public and private land. The guidance adds that a network of such sites on well-used routes is more valuable than a single isolated site. Where transit provision in all forms is insufficient to provide the transit capacity required then a higher incidence of unauthorised encampment will occur than would otherwise be the case. This position would require a strategy for managing encampments will recognises the need for toleration in absence of authorised places to stop or move on.
- 6.6.2 The calculation of need for transit accommodation includes two elements: data from the twice yearly CLG Caravan Count and information on the existence of private transit provision in the study area. In the Caravan Count unauthorised encampments are recorded in the category described as Caravans on Unauthorised Sites not owned by Gypsies and Travellers (both 'tolerated' and 'not tolerated'). These encampments are indicators of a need for transit accommodation. Unauthorised encampments may have an element which contributes to the need for residential accommodation and in the calculations of residential pitch requirements for 2010 – 15 these are shown in row 7. This includes one tolerated encampment established since 1999 on private land in Mendip District. The results from the last five counts are shown in Table 6.9 which shows that encampments are strongly concentrated in Mendip District which accounts for 87% of the average level of encampment in Somerset.



Table 6.9 Caravans on Sites on land not owned by Gypsies (CLG data)					
Jan 2010	July 2009	Jan 2009	July 2008	Jan 2008	Average
<b>Mendip District</b>					
65	54	66	105	80	74
<b>Sedgemoor</b>					
0	7	0	7	0	3
<b>South Somerset</b>					
7	8	11	6	1	7
<b>Taunton Deane</b>					
0	0	0	0	5	1
<b>West Somerset</b>					
0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>All</b>					
72	69	77	118	86	85

- 6.6.3 There are transitory encampments in Somerset associated in part with attendance at festivals and fairs, such as Glastonbury. In our achieved sample of unauthorised encampments the proportion of households/families seeking a permanent site was only equivalent to 18% that sample and often the accommodation sought by respondents was outside of Somerset. This reflects encampments by those who are in Somerset on a transitory basis. At the same time, however, there are four 'tolerated' unauthorised encampments on private land in Mendip District, which have existed throughout the period in which this study has been conducted (October 2009 – August 2010) with the oldest having being established 11 years ago.
- 6.6.4 Transit accommodation requirements are calculated in terms of caravan capacity rather than pitches. CLG data records one local authority transit site in Somerset, this being the Middlezoy Transit Site, Sedgemoor District, with a capacity for 19 caravans. Taunton Deane District also reports that there is capacity for 20 transit caravans at a privately owned Gypsy and Traveller caravan site at Stoneyhead, North Curry. It is suggested by members of the community that about half of this capacity is taken up by persons who are not Gypsies and Travellers. It is unclear as to what extent, if any, this capacity is available to meet the need for transit accommodation as reflected in the Caravan Count or, if it were to be available, if those preferring to encamp in Mendip District would make use of it. For the purpose of this report it has been assumed that none of this capacity (transit pitches used by non Gypsy-Travellers) is included within the residential pitch capacity reported in the CLG Gypsy Caravan Count.
- 6.6.5 There is no consistent format and frequency for the logging and reporting of information on encampments across the study area. For instance some local authorities record encampments on their own land only other than at the time of the Caravan Count. Until recently one authority did not carry out the Count and CLG published a figure based on past returns. The January 2010 Count was, however, carried out across the whole of the study area. The Caravan

Count, being conducted on two days in a year, is indicative of the level of encampment. Future planning would be assisted if a continuous log were maintained holding similar information on nature, size, duration, frequency and outcome of encampments.

6.6.6 The range of the level of caravans encamped at the time of the last five counts has been between 69 (July 2009) and 118 (July 2008), with average figure being 85 caravans. In practice the range may be much wider than these figures would suggest. If it was proposed to establish a level of transit provision which would provide an alternative to encampment at all times then the transit capacity needed would need to be at the peak, rather than the average, level of encampment. This would give rise to unused capacity at times below the peak level of encampment.

6.6.7 The judgement about how far to provide for peaks through transit provision and how far to tolerate them is essentially a policy consideration, including assessment of the impact of transit provision (if any) in adjacent areas and, in particular, the impact of provision on movement between the study area and other areas. Table 6.10 compares encampment recorded in the Caravan Count and the transit capacity identified in paragraph 6.6.4.

Table 6.10 Peak Encampment Levels compared to LA Transit Capacity						
	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
Peak Encampment Level*	105	7	11	5	0	125
LA Transit Capacity**	0	19	0	0	0	19
Difference	105	-12	11	5	0	106

\*Last five Caravan Counts

\*\* CLG data on Gypsy sites provided by local authorities, January 2010

6.6.8 Based on the information available to the study team we would recommend that additional transit caravan capacity be established in 2010-2015 at a level of 100 caravans. We would recommend that this provision be distributed approximately in accordance with the distribution of encampments in the last five CLG Caravan Counts as follows. In Table 6.11 these figures have been rounded.

Table 6.11 Distribution of Proposed Additional Transit Caravan Capacity						
	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
Cumulative CLG Count	370 (87%)	14 (3%)	33 (8%)	5 (2%)	0 (0%)	422 (100%)
Transit Capacity Recommended	80	5	10	5	0	100

\*Last five Caravan Counts

6.6.9 This additional provision recommended may consist of public or private land and formal sites or informal stopping places.. The need for provision could in part be met by a policy of toleration including action to re-open traditional stopping places such as green lanes and verges. In Table 6.10 we have shown Sedgemoor District as having a transit caravan capacity of 19 as stated in CLG data *Gypsy sites provided by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords in England*, January 2010. One partner authority has commented that the Middlezoy Transit Site does not, in practice, provide this capacity as it reports that ,”occupants are not able to stay longer than 28 days. It is, therefore, an emergency stopping point only”. We would also recommend that Taunton Deane review the accessibility of existing privately owned provision in its area. On the basis that there is assumed to be no further growth in transit need arising from unauthorised encampments we would not recommend further transit caravan capacity in 2015-2020. Should local authorities be unable or unwilling to make this level of provision then they will need to be satisfied that they have adequate arrangements from the toleration, servicing and monitoring of unauthorised encampments at higher levels than would otherwise have been the case had they have made further provision.

6.6.10 Given the preferences of Gypsies and Travellers for smaller sites, often shared only with those who regularly live and travel together, we would recommend that the need for additional transit provision be met through provision in a number of locations. Whilst separate from each other transit sites should be on locations in Mendip District and en route to it. The unauthorised encampments in Mendip identified in the study period include those occurring in Chewton Mendip, Glastonbury, Pilton, Shepton Mallet and Sharpham. If additional transit capacity is established on privately owned land the local authorities will wish to satisfy themselves that such sites would be accessible to those Gypsies and Travellers with a need to travel and this capacity would not be absorbed by any one type of Traveller grouping or the wider non Gypsy Traveller population. We would recommend consultation with Gypsies and Travellers, landowners and potential providers to identify suitable locations and management arrangements for such sites.

## 6.7 Travelling Showpeople

- 6.7.1 Travelling Showpeople are included in the definition of Gypsies and Travellers used for the purposes of the Housing Act 2004 and referred to in CLG guidance on accommodation assessments. The brief for this study includes a requirement to assess the accommodation needs of Travelling Showpeople. Showpeople (typically referred to as Showmen) are an occupational category, rather than an ethnic group, who have established patterns of travelling. The meaning of 'travelling showpeople' for the purposes of Circular 04/2007, which provides guidance on planning aspects of travelling showpeople, is "Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined in ODPM Circular 1/2006". This report discusses under this heading the accommodation of those who are in membership of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain. The accommodation needs of other Travellers, such as New Travellers who work as entertainers or circus people is covered under the separate assessments of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers. It should be noted, however, that some of these Travellers have similar accommodation needs to those of Showpeople within membership of the Showmen's Guild. At the time of writing the Secretary of State has announced his intention to revoke planning circulars on Travellers and this may include Circular 04/2007 on Planning for Travelling Showpeople.
- 6.7.2 Travelling Showpeople's sites (usually known as yards) normally can contain residential accommodation, storage or maintenance areas dependent on the needs of their business and the uses that are authorised. CLG guidance suggest that sites for Showpeople should be suitable for both accommodation and business uses having regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants, their children and neighbourhood residents. Some Showpeople use trailers whilst working, whilst others, for example if working more locally, may use a tourer. There are planning restrictions on the building of accommodation on sites which can result in 'chalet' accommodation on the site and an associated bricks and mortar dwelling adjacent to, but off the site, where an owner or manager may live.
- 6.7.3 The Showmen's Guild states that issues effecting Showmen's accommodation include doubled up pitches, overcrowding of residential pitches, and the impact of vehicle overcrowding on a site. It is concerned about the provision of adequate winter quarters which, when the traveling season is over, Showpeople can use as a permanent base to spend time during the winter months. The Guild states that ideally this should be within reach of schools and shops, and be large enough to enable maintenance work to be carried out on equipment. Whilst traditionally such sites have been used in the winter it is now reported that more Showpeople are wishing to occupy these sites during periods of the summer, with older family members

requiring less seasonal occupation and a more permanent base to assist in the education of children. Showpeople may also wish to return to their own site during the summer when in between bookings.

6.7.4 The GTAA carried out in the West of England study area included the adjacent unitary authorities of North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset. This found that the overwhelming majority of Showpeople expected that their children would remain in the same business, and that accordingly new provision for yards (large enough to hold equipment and rides) was required. The study found a high level of suppressed households and overcrowding amongst Show families, in part because of the need for space associated with their trade. The study team concluded that Showpeople where an extremely well organised business community, familiar with dealing with legislation and contractual requirements, and that they have access to finance appropriate to the self-provision of sites provide that suitable land can be identified.

6.7.5 The study team has identified five sites that are Showmen's yards distributed as follows;

Mendip District Council	1
Sedgemoor District Council	1
South Somerset District Council	2
Taunton Deane Borough Council	1
West Somerset District Council	<u>0</u>
All	5

6.7.6 One interview has carried out using a survey form bespoke to Showmen's sites. These yards are self owned sites with planning permission. At the site where an interview was conducted it was reported that this was suitable for current needs, however, the intention of family members to continue in the business, marry and establish families of their own will require additional provision to be made. These yards are required in locations that are reasonably close to transport routes.

6.7.7 From the information available to us we estimate that there will be an additional need for Showmen's yards. In the one survey which was achieved, a need for four additional yards was identified in the period 2010 – 2020. From the one interview conducted it would not be sound to gross up findings to provide an overall estimate of the number of additional pitches required for such yards. We would, however, recommend that consultation take place between local planning authorities, the Showmen's Guild and individual families which would establish the most appropriate size, type and location of sites having regard to the guidance available and the needs and preferences of these families. These would need to be permanent sites on private site land owned by Showpeople for which planning permission is granted for use all year around, rather than for a set period of months in a year. These sites need to be of sufficient size to accommodate family members who live

together and vehicles and equipment; with 3.7 trailers/living vehicles per household being found in the adjacent West of England GTAA (2007).

**Table 6.12 Summary of residential pitch requirements in Somerset GTAA**

	Men dip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	All
1. Socially rented pitches January 2010	23	8	20	23	10	84
2. Pitches on private authorised sites January 2010	49	18	11	67	0	145
3. Total pitches/households January 2010 (rows 1+2)	72	26	31	90	10	229
4. Overcrowding on LA sites January 2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Net movement from housing to sites 2010-2015	4	2	2	3	1	12
6. Unauthorised development January 2010	28	11	4	7	0	50
7. Unauthorised encampment 2010-2015	14	0	1	0	0	15
8. End of temporary permissions 2010-2015	4	2	0	6	0	12
9. New household formation 2010-2015	25	11	11	18	4	69
10. Additional need 2010-2015 (add rows 4 to 9)	75	26	18	34	5	158
11. LA pitches not utilised January 2010	0	0	0	3	0	3
12. Authorised pitches undeveloped January 2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Planning applications pending January 2010	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. New pitches planned January 2010	0	0	3	0	0	3

15. Vacancies on socially rented sites 2010-2015	6	2	5	6	3	21
16. Additional Supply 2010-2015 (add rows 11 to 15)	6	2	8	9	3	27
17. Extra residential pitches required 2010-15 (row 10 – 16)	69	24	10	25	2	131 <sup>39</sup>
18. Extra residential pitches required 2015-20	24	10	8	19	3	64
19. Extra residential pitches required 2010-20 (row 17 + 18)	<b>93</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>195<sup>40</sup></b>

<sup>39</sup> A reminder, as stated before, that the total in row 17 includes the difference of 1 brought about by rounding up of rows and columns in table 6.2 which results in the differential in pitch requirements by districts, and then across the study area

<sup>40</sup> As above for total in row 19

## 7. FINDINGS: WORK, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

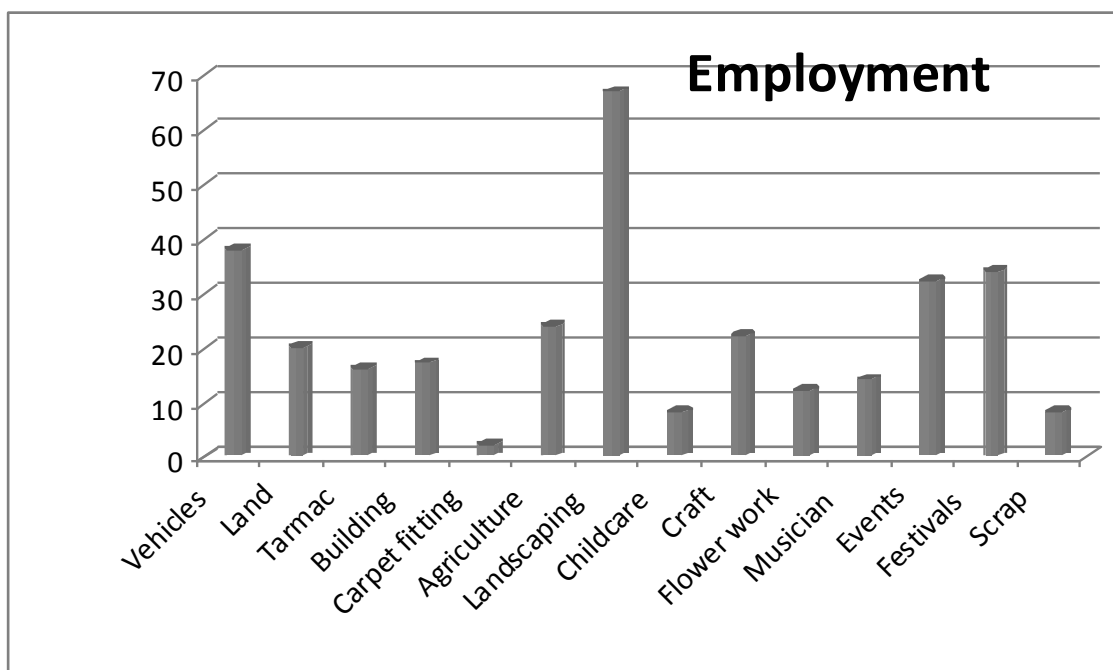
### 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The issues of work education and training are the focus of this chapter. Whilst there are some responses showing that accommodation is the key to these issues, there are some interesting points to note on the skills level and need for support in certain areas.

### 7.2 Work

7.2.1 One hundred and thirty one (131) of the respondents were willing to answer some questions about their work. The chart below shows the most commonly mentioned types of employment – respondents may have more than one area of expertise and so more than one area of work was often included in the answer.

**Figure 7.2.1 Types of employment**



7.2.2 Those whose work did not fit into the standardised answers included the following:

- Activist
- Housing support worker
- Housewife
- Cleaning
- Beauty/ Hair
- Chef
- Cabinet maker



- Factory worker
- Supermarket worker

### 7.3 Restrictions to accessing work

7.3.1 Thirty one (31) people said that they had found their address (or lack of) a difficulty in accessing employment. Of these 31 respondents, 14 were in work, but 17 who did not have a job said that their address was a factor. The reasons varied, for example on the roadside the lack of security of tenure, and lack of parking and storage was key, in houses again a lack of parking and some tenancy restrictions; tenancy restrictions were also a factor on official sites too.

A further question in the survey asked whether there were restrictions in current accommodation (e.g. tenancy restrictions, or lack of space) which affected the opportunity to work. There were 37 responses to this question, stratified below:

**Figure 7.3.1 Accommodation restricts work opportunities**



7.3.2 There may be an opportunity to think about mixed use sites that allow residents to undertake some work as appropriate on site. The showman who was surveyed did not have restrictions for work in relation to fair rides and equipment, but there was concern in the future that a lack of accommodation for his adult children would affect their ability to take over and grow the business. Patterns of travel for work were very varied taking respondents all over the South West and further afield. There was some local travel to Bridgwater, Shepton Mallet, Bristol, Glastonbury, Wells, Frome and Taunton; and other respondents referred to travel locally for the fairs and festivals.

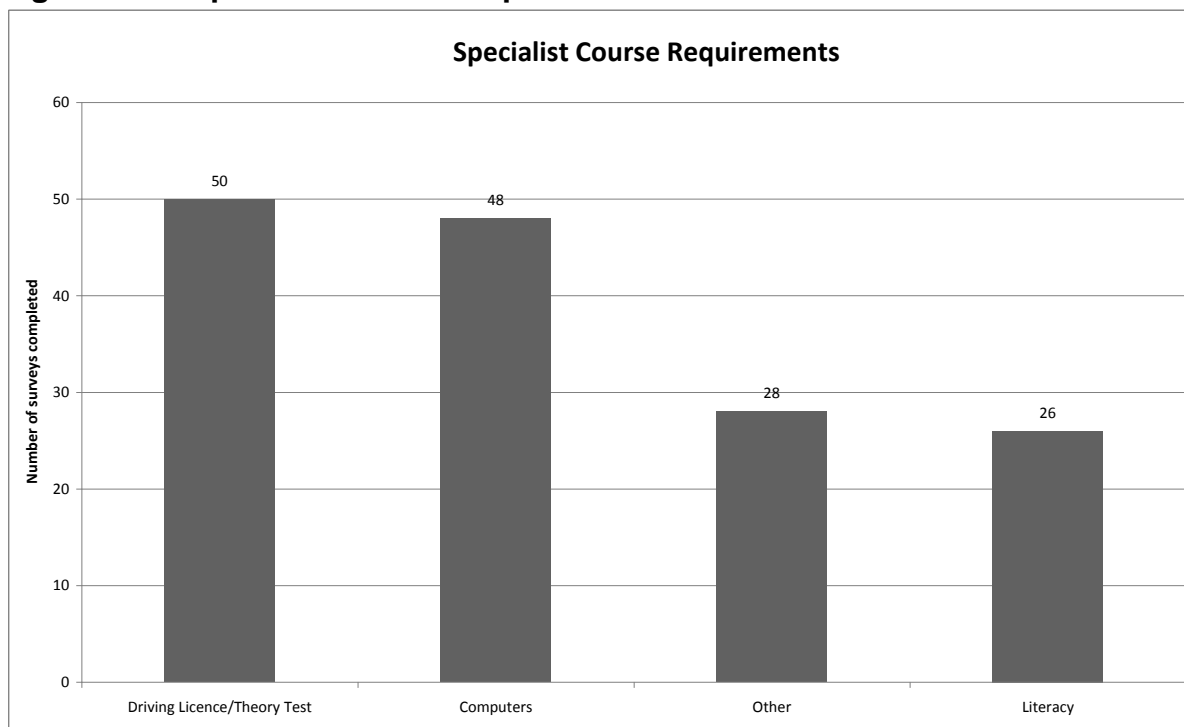
71 respondents said that work had changed over the years. Reasons given included:

- Machinery taken over
- Not so much land work

- Health and safety
- Rules and regulations
- Family circumstances (bereavement)
- Much more festival work now

## 7.4 Training

**Figure 7.4.1 Specialist course requirements**

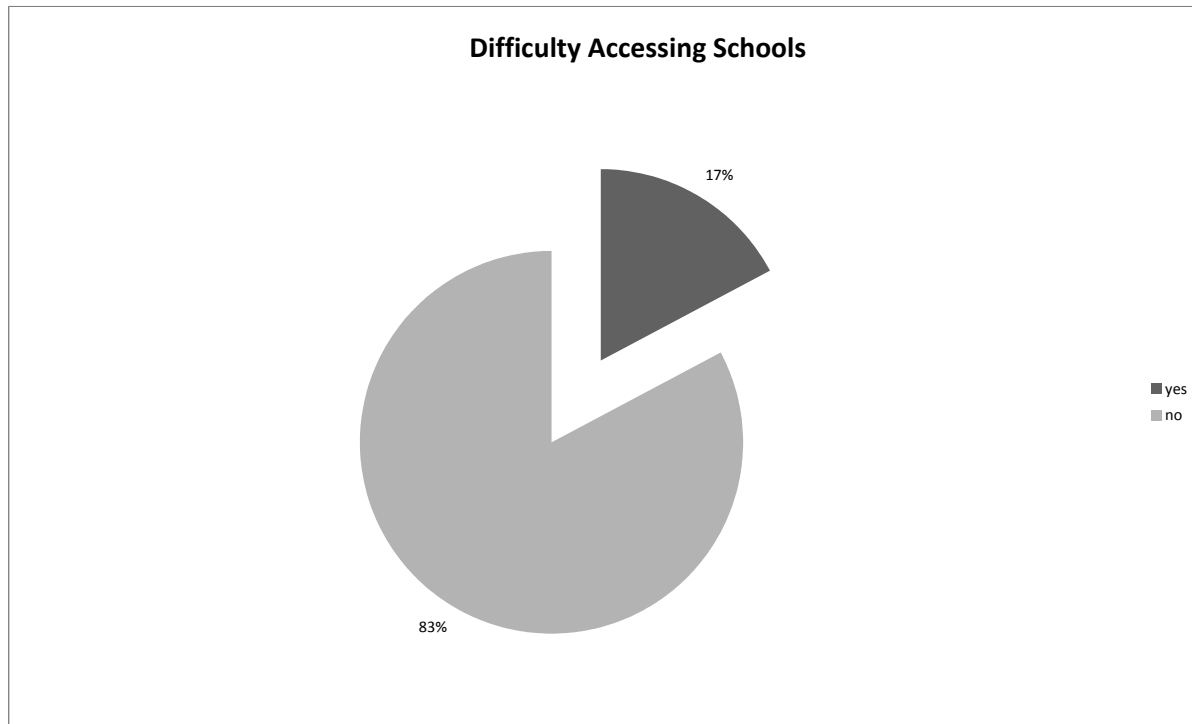


30 people said that they needed training to enable them to undertake work, or to change their work: broad areas of training need included:

- Literacy
- Computing
- Writing
- Driving
- HGV licence
- Woodland management
- Nursery nurse training
- Sewing
- Hedge laying
- Chainsaw training
- Social work training

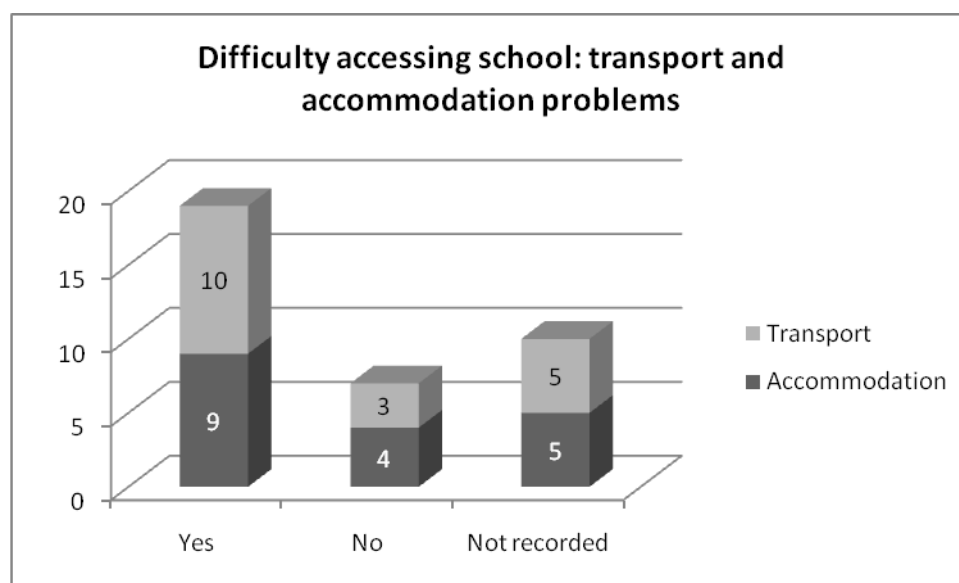
## 7.5 Education

**Figure 7.5.1 Accessing schools**



7.5.1 Whilst the majority of respondents state that they do not have a problem accessing schools, there are still some who face challenges. The chart over the page shows respondents stating that accommodation or transport were part of the issue.

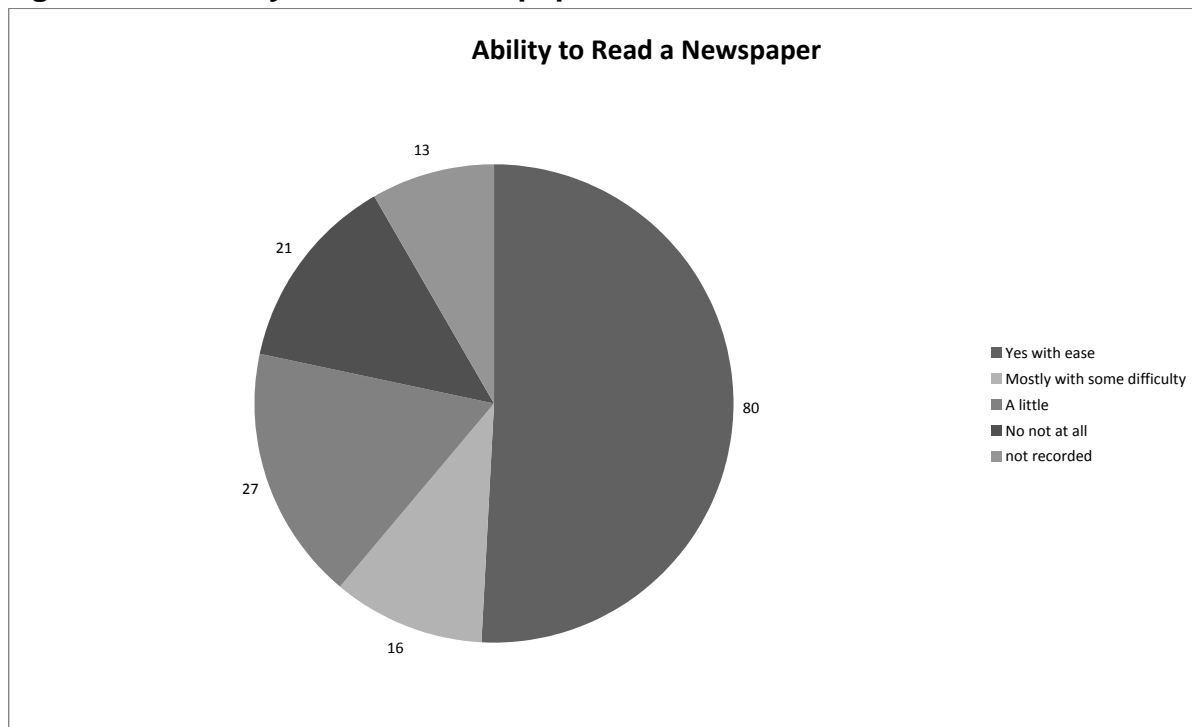
**Figure 7.5.2 Transport and Accommodation Problems**



## 7.6 Literacy

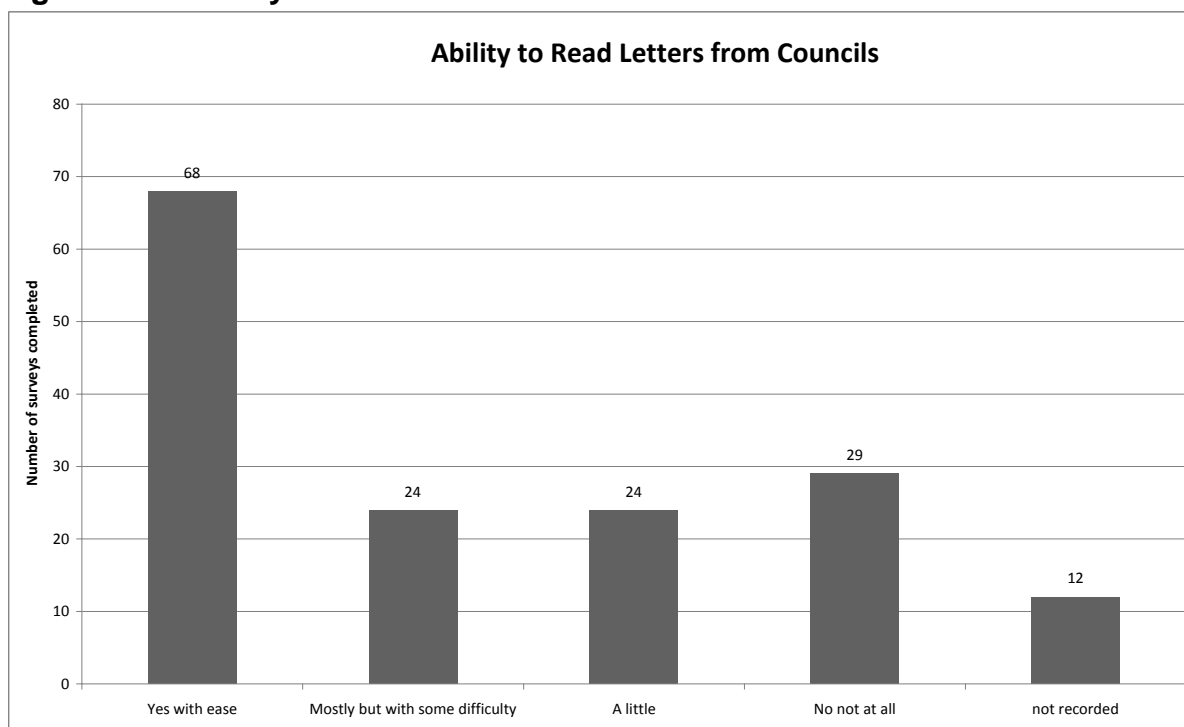
7.6.1 There are varying abilities in literacy across the Gypsy and Traveller population in Somerset. Whilst just over 50% of respondents said that they could read a newspaper with ease, there was still a significant number who could not at all, or only a little.

**Figure 7.6.1 Ability to read a newspaper**



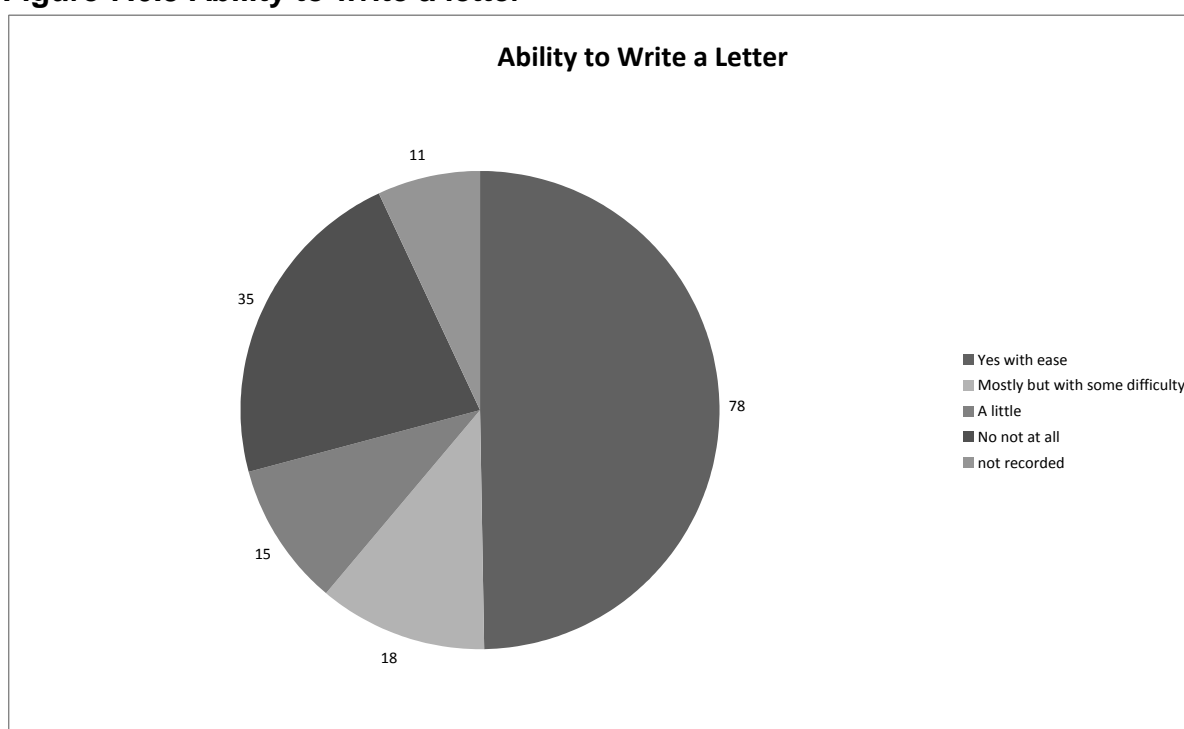
7.6.2 The ability to read became a little more challenging when reading letters from the council and so it is recommended that councils ensure that all correspondence meets the Plain English standard and that appropriate forms of communication are used with particular segments of service users.

**Figure 7.6.2 Ability to read a letter from the council**

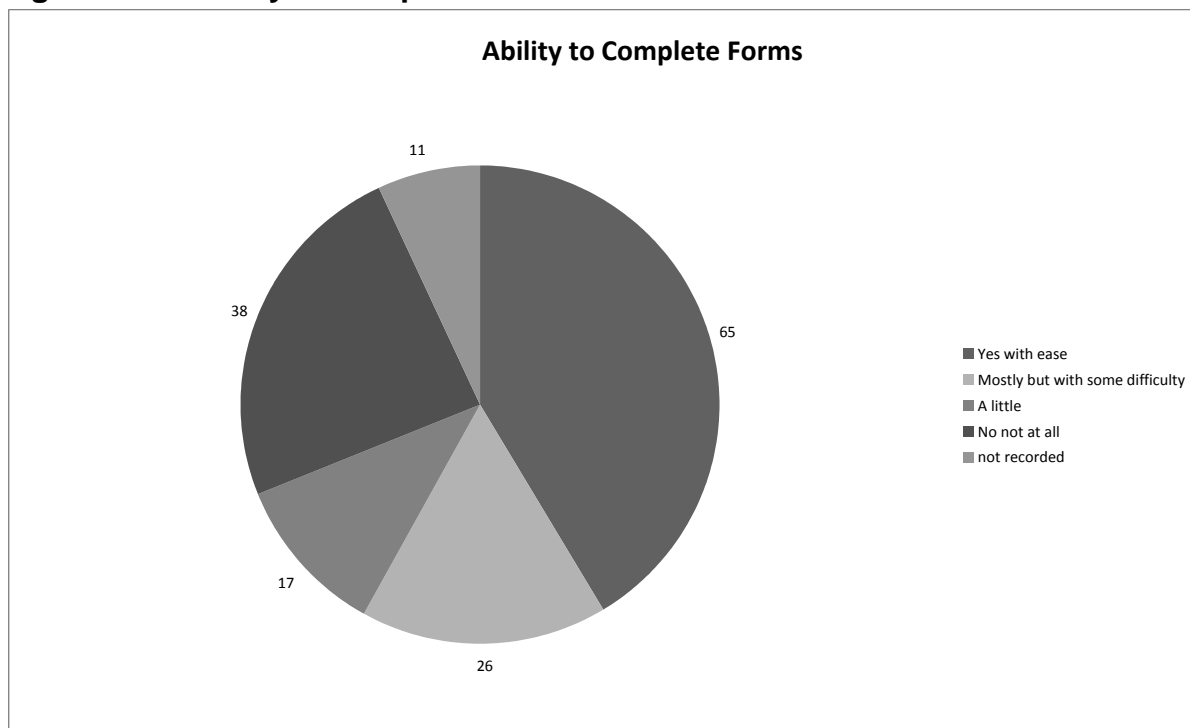


7.6.3 Writing was a little more problematic still and links can be made to requests for training support, discussed above, on basic literacy. It should be noted that nearly half of respondents had some difficulty with writing a letter and the challenges remained with other more complex tasks like filling in forms.

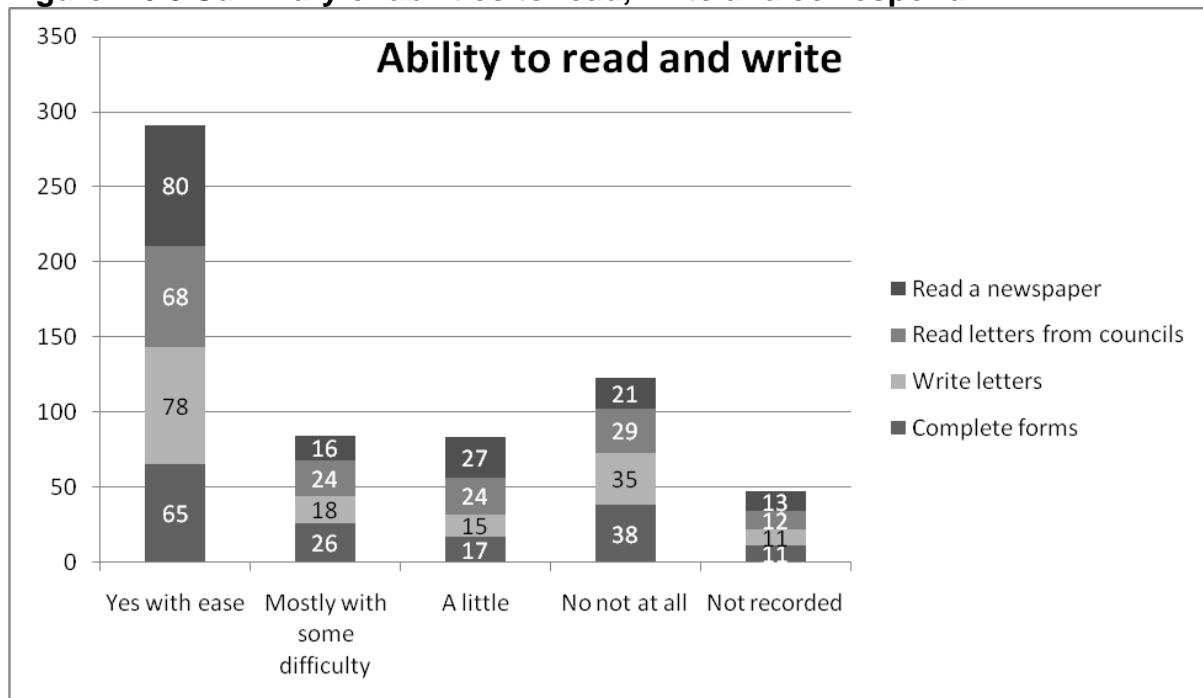
**Figure 7.6.3 Ability to write a letter**



**Figure 7.6.4 Ability to complete forms**



**Figure 7.6.5 Summary of abilities to read, write and correspond**



**The research team recommends that the district councils liaise with the Traveller Education Service and with local colleges and schools to see what support can be provided to improve the overall picture for literacy in the Gypsy and Traveller communities in Somerset.**

**The research team also recommends that accommodation is seen as an essential part to good education and accessing schools. District councils should seek support from partner agencies during its process of identifying and developing future sites.**

## 8. FINDINGS: HEALTH, SERVICES AND SAFETY

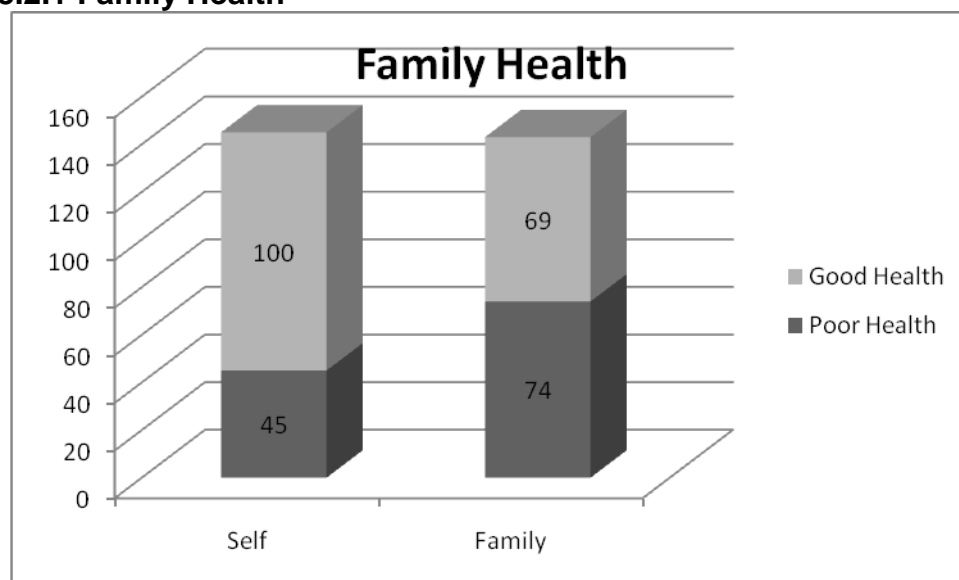
### 8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Gypsies and Travellers are known to report poorer health than the wider community and this manifests in a number of ways. This chapter outlines key responses on health, but a later chapter (eleven) looks at the issue in more detail. Services and safety are also discussed here.

### 8.2 Health

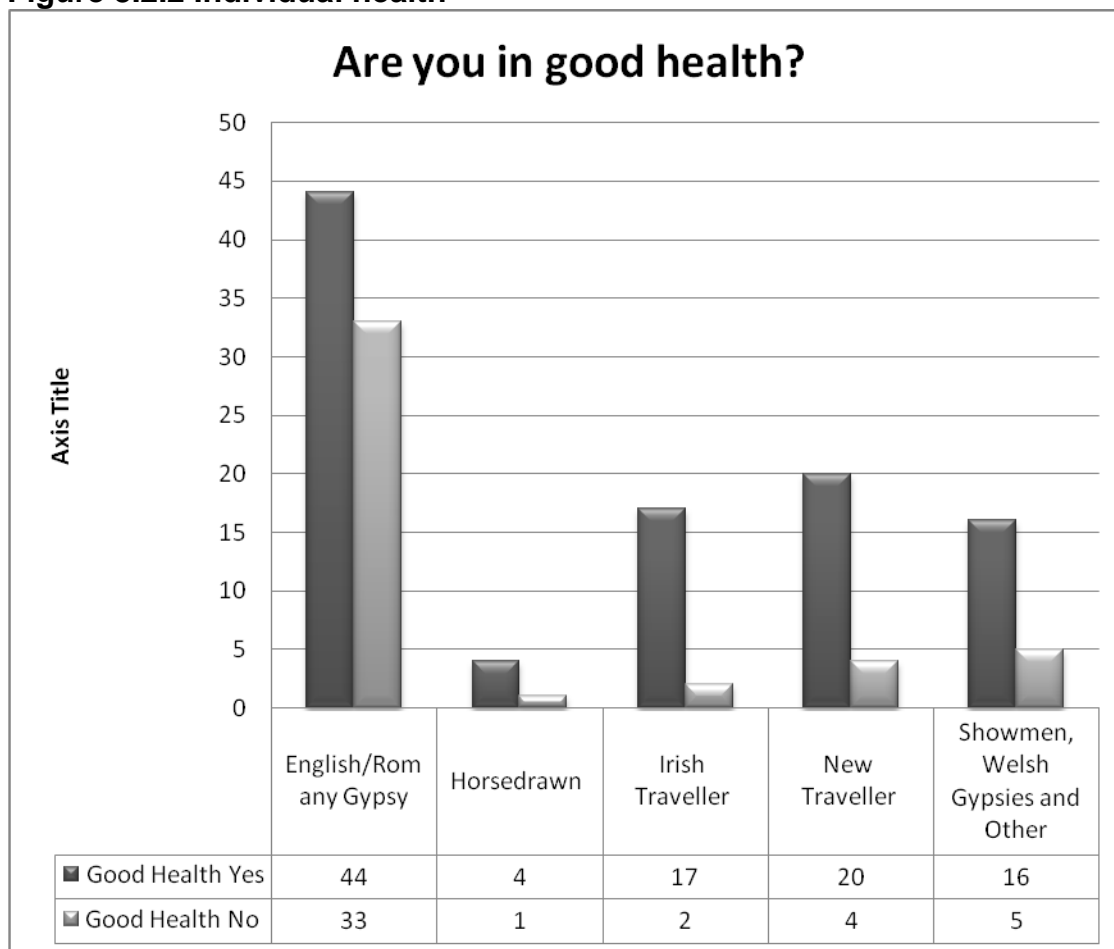
8.2.1 One hundred (100) respondents said that they had good health. The chart below shows the responses for both the individual's own health and for that of other family members.

**Figure 8.2.1 Family Health**





**Figure 8.2.2 Individual health**



8.2.2 Respondents gave details of poor health which included:

- Arthritis
- Back problems
- Cancer
- Depression
- Heart problems
- Knees and joints.

Over half of the individuals saying that they had health problems reported that it affected day-to-day activities.

8.2.3 When asked what sort of health issues affected family members, details given included:

- Asthma
- Autism
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Back problems
- Cancer

- Depression
- Heart problems
- Nerves

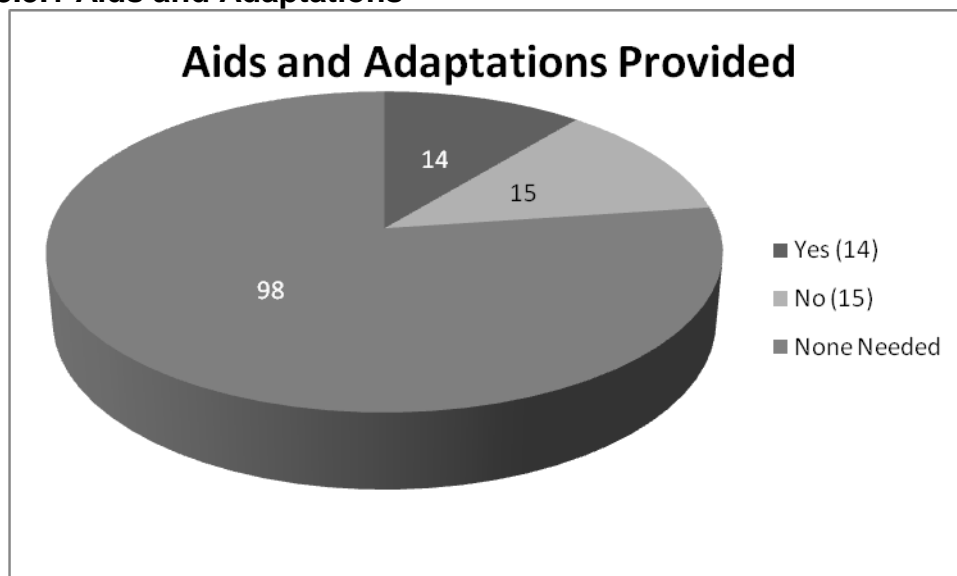
### 8.3 Physical arrangements – aids and adaptations

8.3.1 One hundred and twenty nine (129) respondents answered the question on problems with physical arrangements in current accommodation – 11 of these replied yes, and the needs they outlined included:

- Grab rails
- Ramps
- Making accommodation wheelchair accessible.

8.3.2 A question followed on from this asking whether aids and adaptations were needed to current accommodation; this asked respondents whether they had all the aids and adaptations needed – responses were either yes, no or none needed and the chart below shows the need outlined in the answers. 14 said that they had aids and adaptations in their home, but 15 said that they did not – the remainder (98) respondents said that none were needed.

**Figure 8.3.1 Aids and Adaptations**

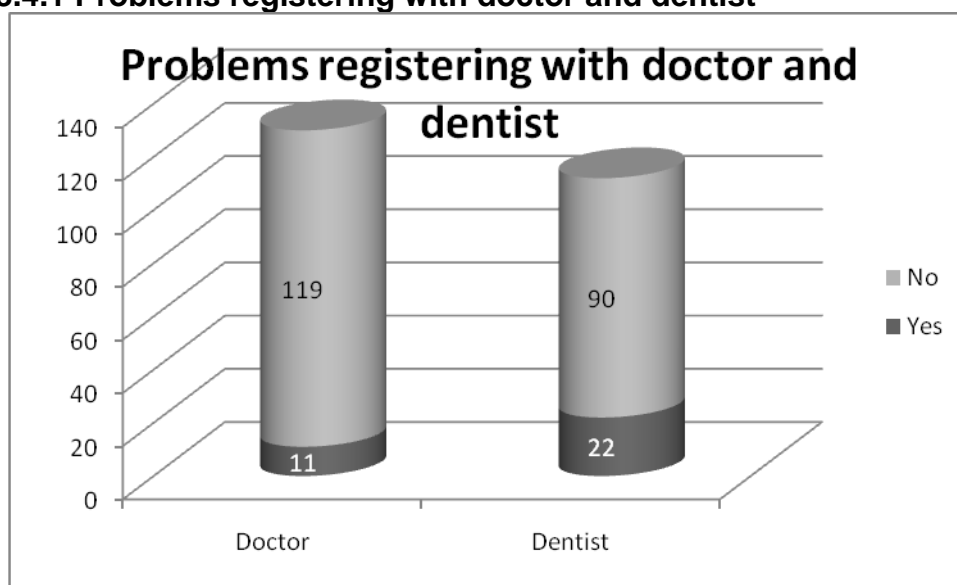


8.3.3 The majority of respondents were registered with a doctor, but there were still eleven people who said that they weren't. The picture for registration with a dentist was worse with over a quarter of respondents saying that they were not registered. See the charts below.

## 8.4 Registering with Doctor and Dentist

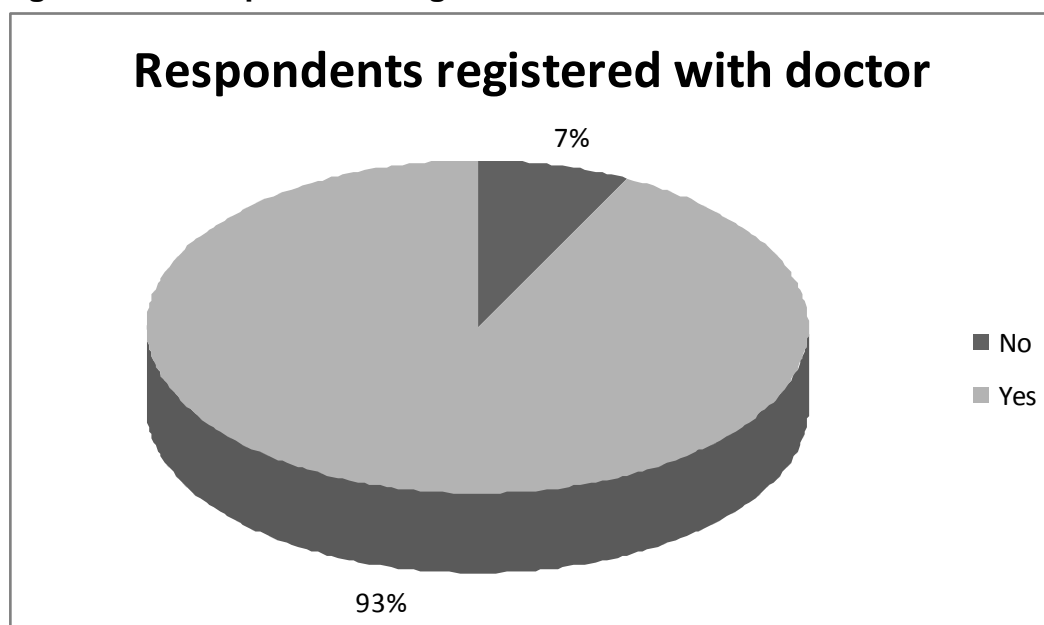
8.4.1 Sixteen (16) respondents said that they were currently receiving treatment from a doctor or dentist, but 10 of those said they had transport difficulties which affected appointments. Two further respondents said that transport difficulties had affected treatment in the past.

**Figure 8.4.1 Problems registering with doctor and dentist**

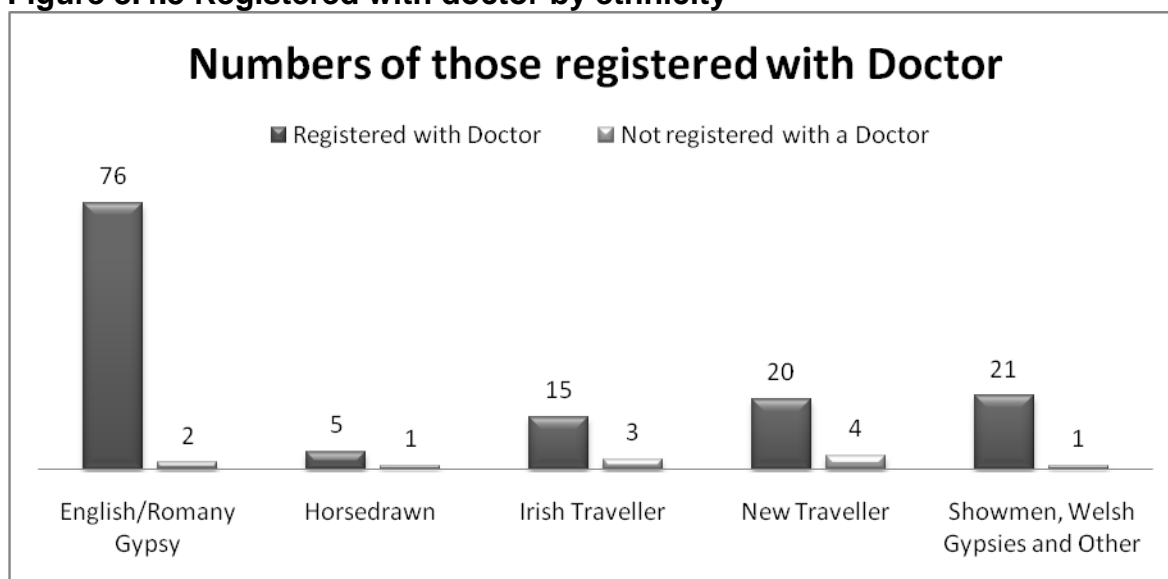


The proportion of respondents who were registered with a doctor is encouraging, but 7% of responses still showed that some Gypsies and Travellers were having problems with access.

**Figure 8.4.2 Respondents registered with doctor**

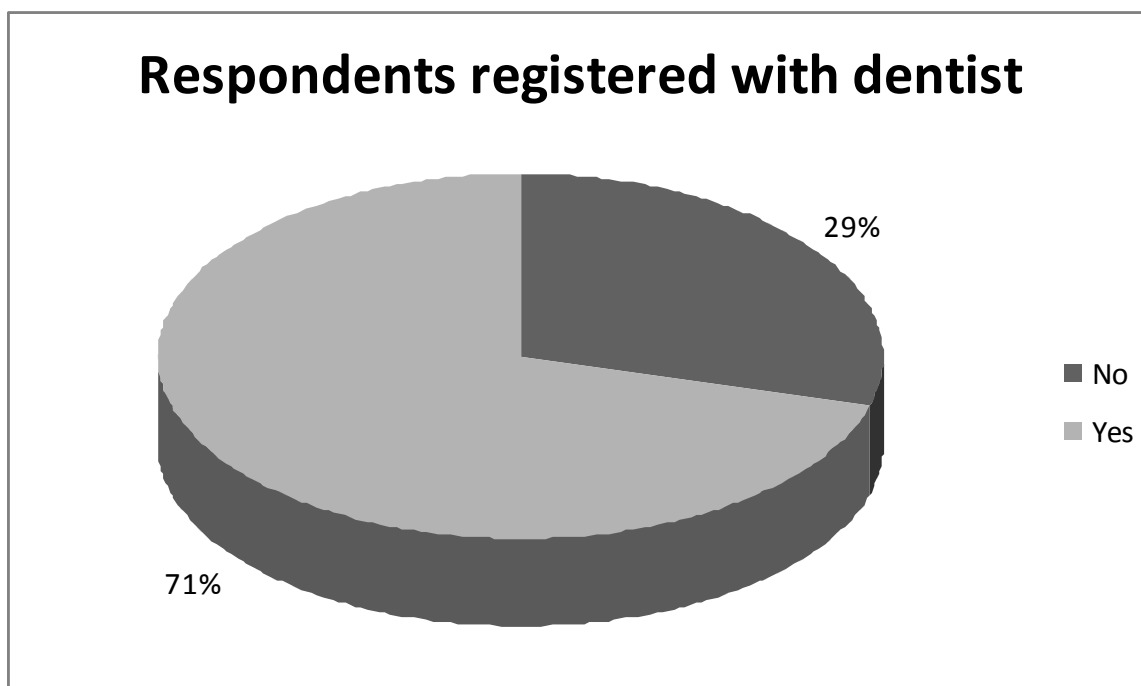


**Figure 8.4.3 Registered with doctor by ethnicity**



8.4.2 The survey asked Gypsies and Travellers whether they were registered with a dentist, whilst there are difficulties in registering with an NHS dentist in the wider population, the proportion of Gypsies and Travellers (over a quarter) not registered is a cause for concern. Organisations like the Robert Barton Trust (RBT), which have unfortunately had to close now due to the financial climate in public and charitable services, had set up a system where a dentist would call at the Trust's office to provide dental treatment. RBT suggested that in the absence of a dentist, New Travellers in particular have had to go to Accident and Emergency departments in cases of severe dental problems, but that often the emergency treatment is to remove the tooth, rather than other treatment.

**Figure 8.4.4 Registered with dentist**



## 8.5 Alternative Treatment

24 respondents, mostly in the New Traveller population, said that they would prefer to use homeopathic remedies to traditional treatments.

## 8.6 Help in accessing Medical Services

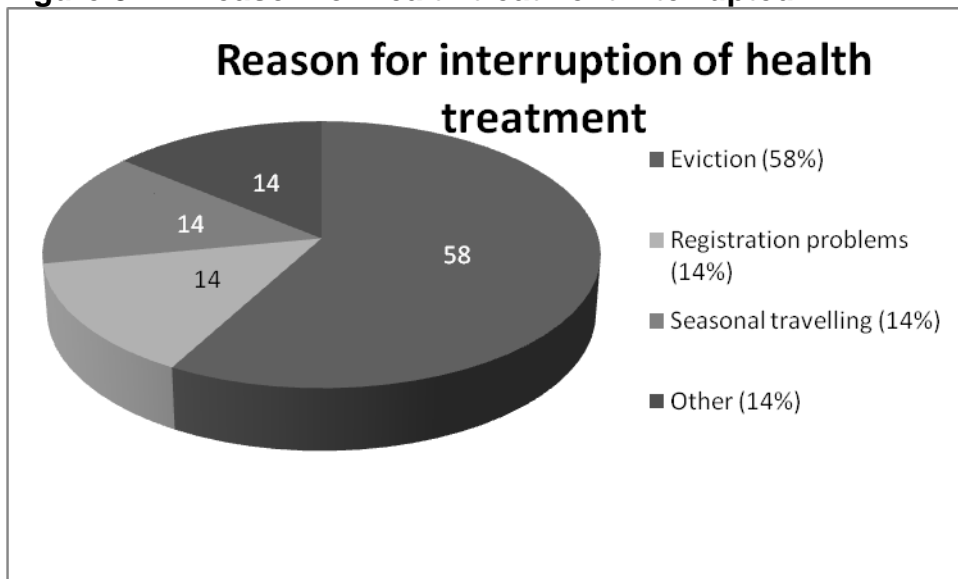
59 respondents said that they had received particular help in accessing medical treatment, this came from a variety of sources including:

- Health visitor
- Traveller education service
- GP
- Family/ friends
- Robert Barton Trust

## 8.7 Interruption of Treatment

21 respondents said that they had had treatment interrupted and that for 16 of them this had led to a worsening of the condition. When asked the reason for interruption, 12 said it was due to eviction, 3 due to problems with registration after being moved on and the remainder due to moving for seasonal work. See the chart overleaf:

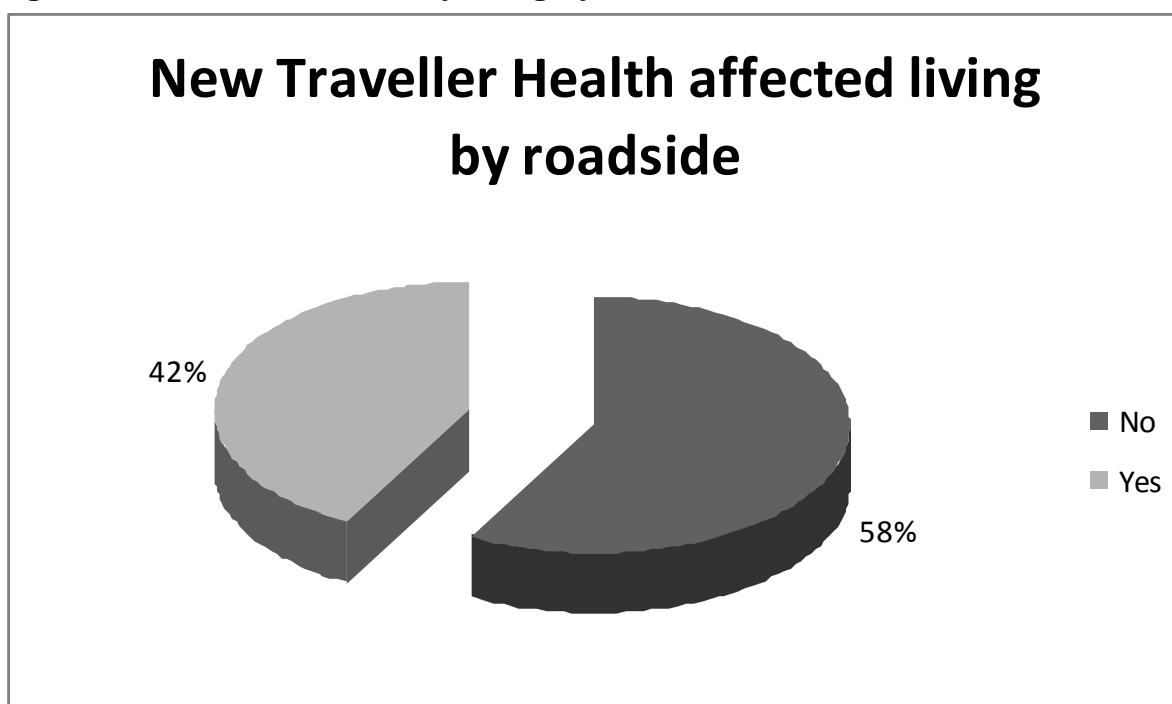
**Figure 8.7.1 Reason for health treatment interrupted**



## 8.8 Effect of current accommodation on Health

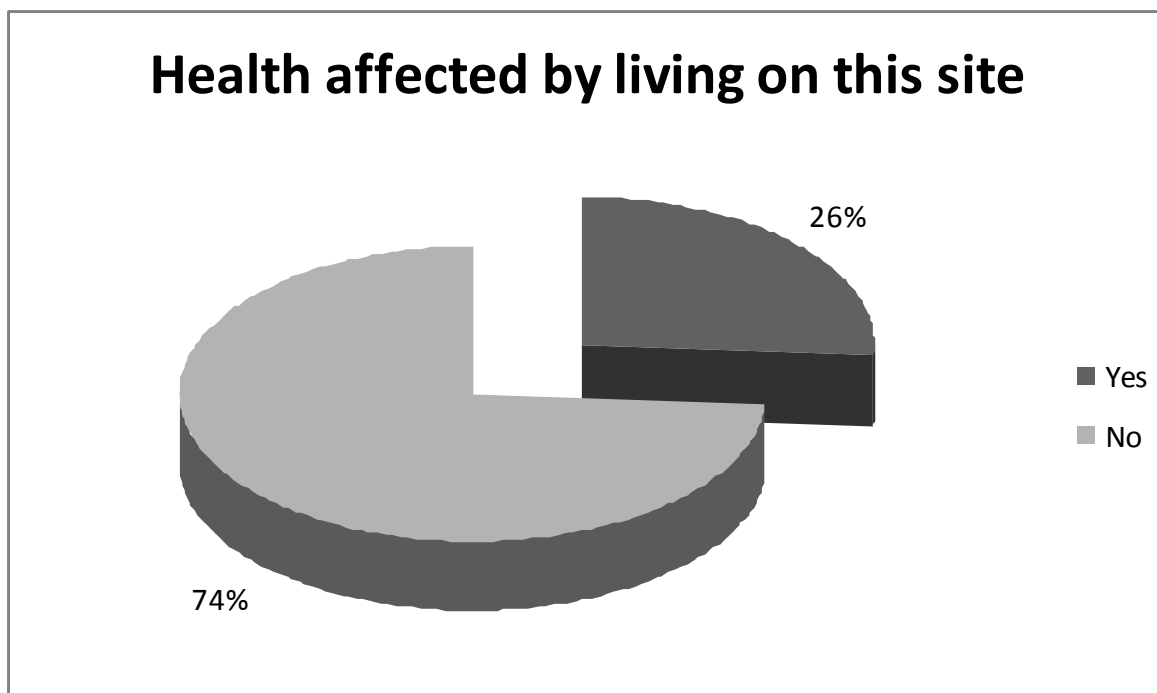
18 New Travellers said that living by the roadside had an ill effect on their health.

**Figure 8.8.1 Health affected by living by roadside**



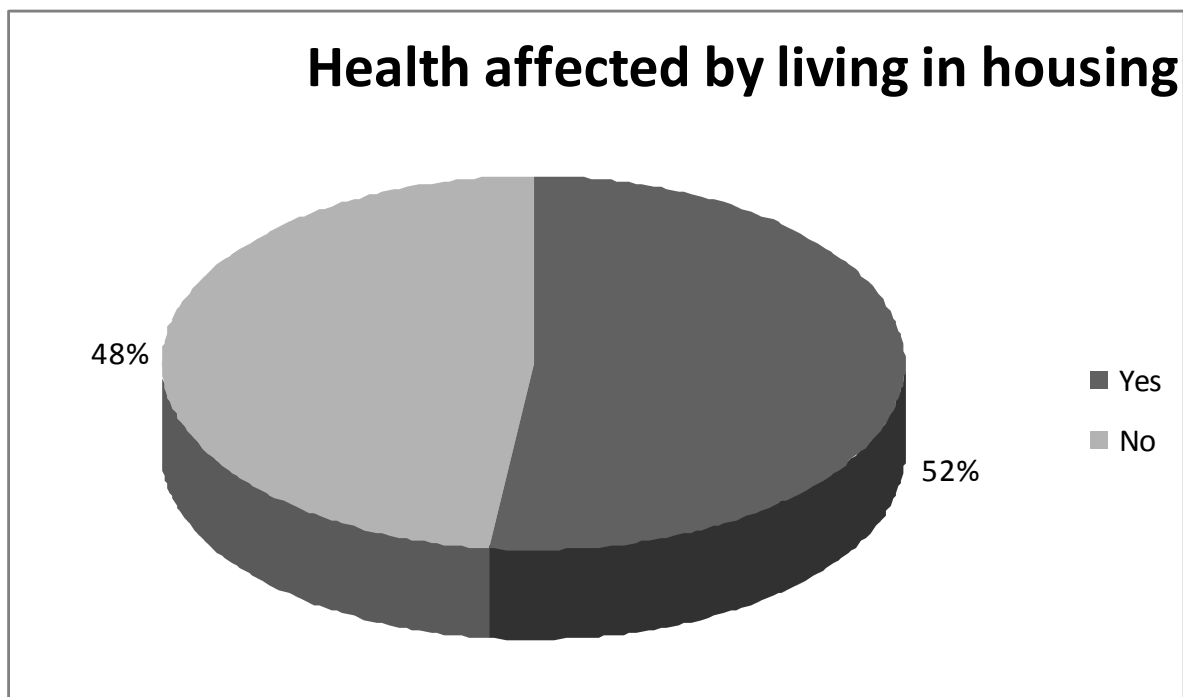
19 Gypsies and Travellers currently living on sites said that their health was made worse by living on their site.

**Figure 8.8.2 Heath affected by this site**



13 Gypsies and Travellers living in houses or flats said that their present accommodation adversely affected their health (over 50%)

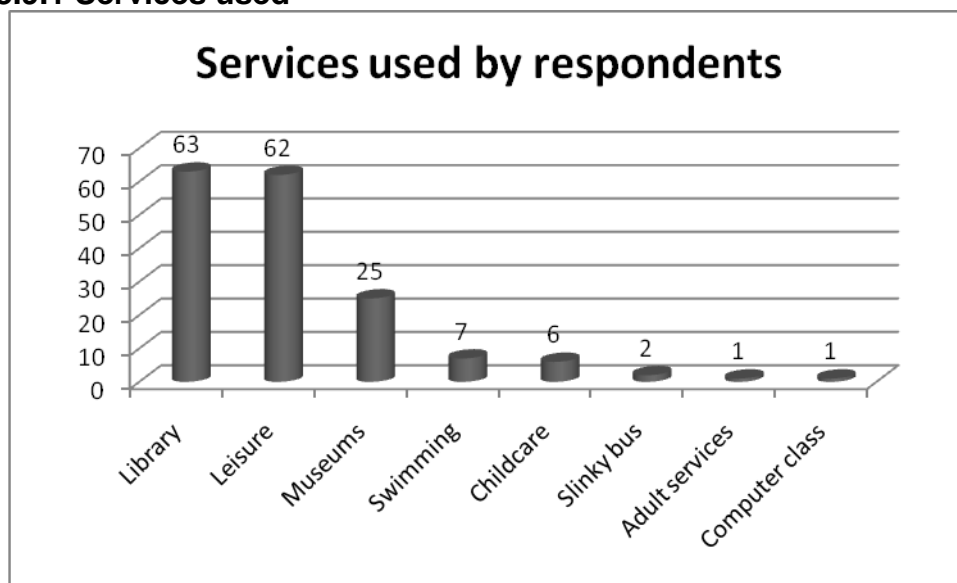
**Figure 8.8.3 Health affected by housing**



## 8.9 Services

8.9.1 Ninety (90) respondents said that they used local authority services. The chart below shows the most used service areas. Half of the respondents said that they had been discriminated against in the provision of services.

**Figure 8.9.1 Services used**



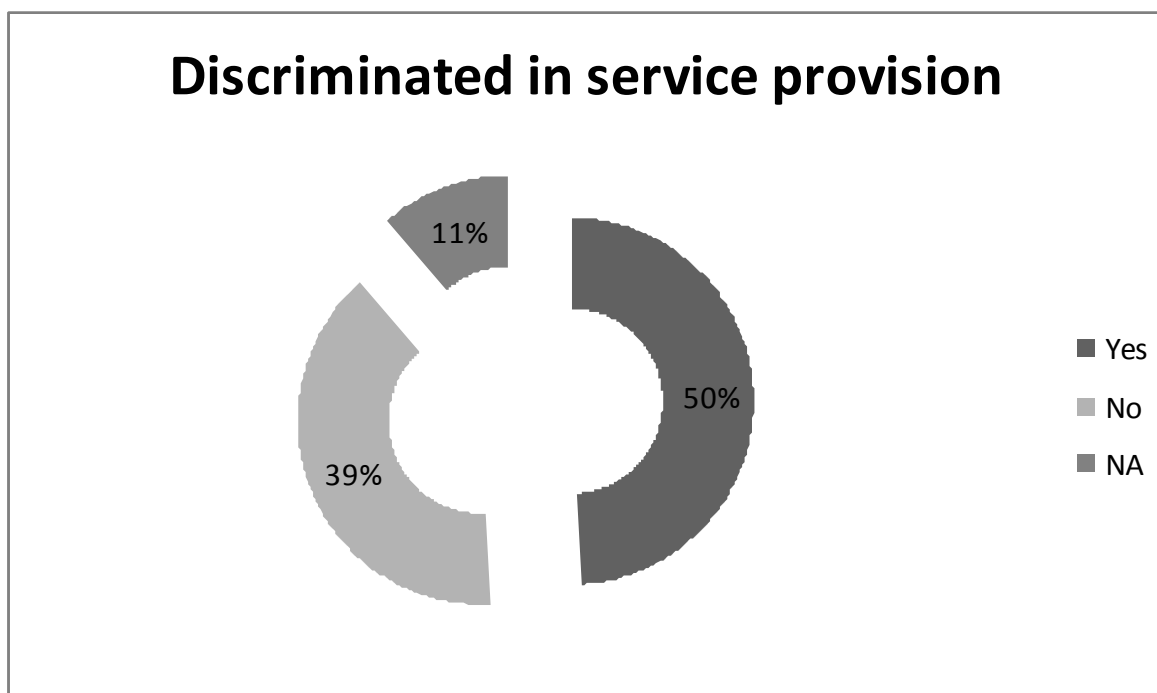
8.9.2 When asked what could be done to improve services, a range of ideas were given, see below ranked in order of most mentioned first:

- Find somewhere for us to live
- Cultural awareness
- Mobile library
- More understanding
- Employ Gypsies and Travellers
- Educate shopkeepers

8.9.3 Gypsies and Travellers were asked their perceptions of discrimination in service delivery and the following chart shows that nearly half of those surveyed felt they had been discriminate against.



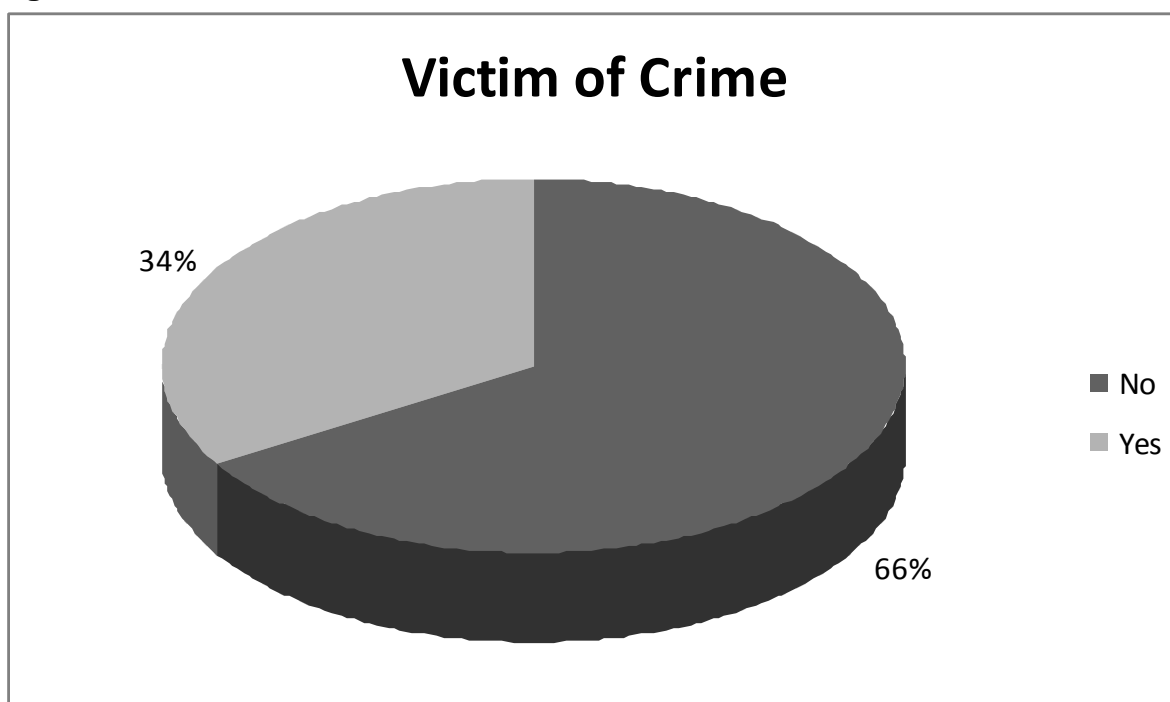
**Figure 8.9.2 Discrimination in service provision**



## 8.10 Crime and Racism

8.10.1 A third of all respondents surveyed (53 people) said that they had been a victim of crime.

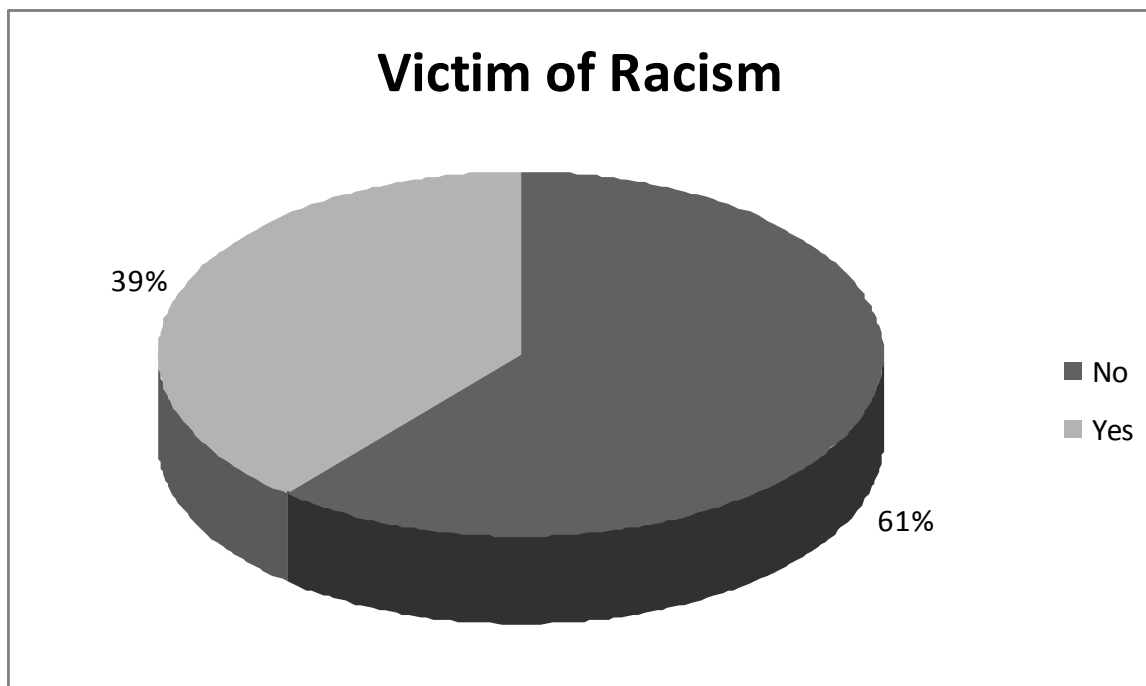
**Figure 8.10.1 Victim of crime**



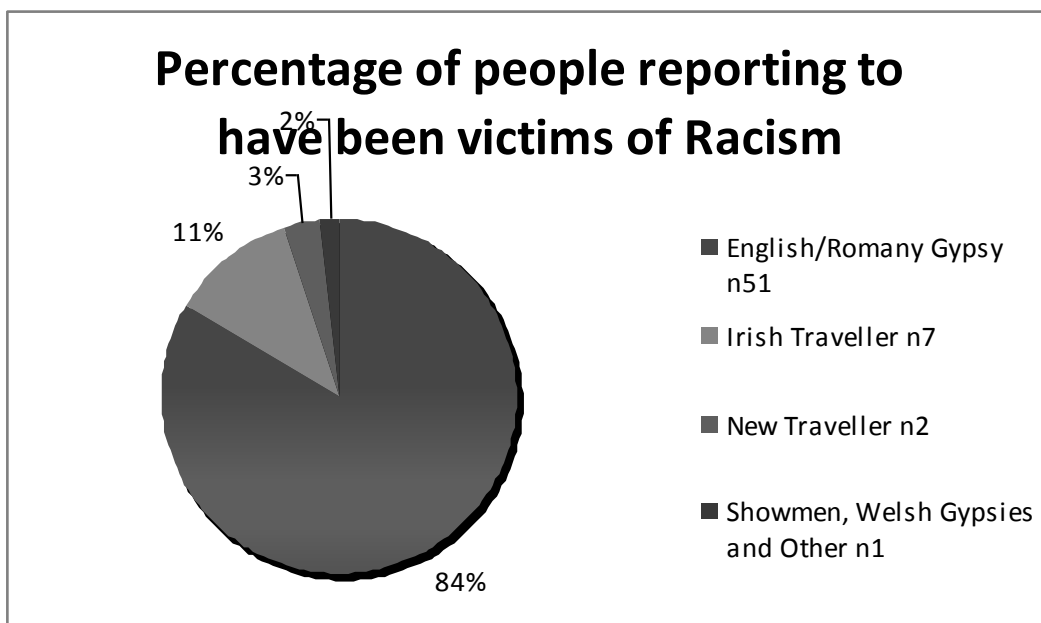
8.10.2 Theft was by far the most common crime reported, but there were some who talked about their caravans being set alight (sometimes whilst people were sleeping in them), illegal evictions and vigilante attacks.

61 respondents said that they had been a victim of racism:

**Figure 8.10.2 Victim of racism**



**Figure 8.10.3 Reporting racism**

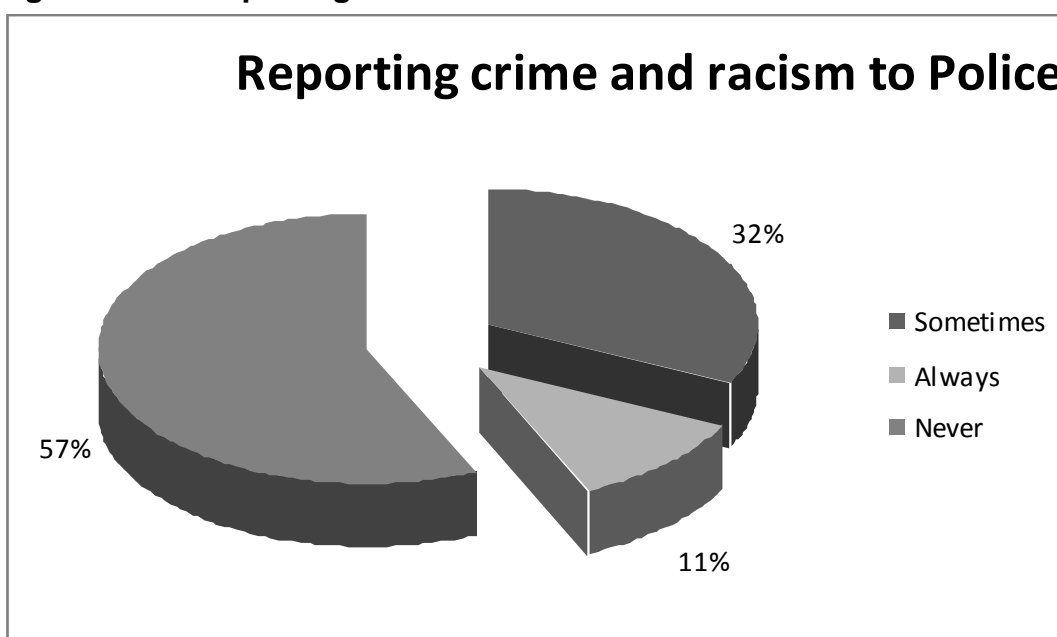


### 8.10.3 Details given by respondents included:

- Name-calling
- Spitting
- Attacks/fights
- Harassment

8.10.3 On the question of whether crime and racism was reported to police – 90 respondents gave an answer. See chart below which shows there needs to still be some work to encourage reporting of incidents to police.

**Figure 8.10.4 Reporting crime and racism**

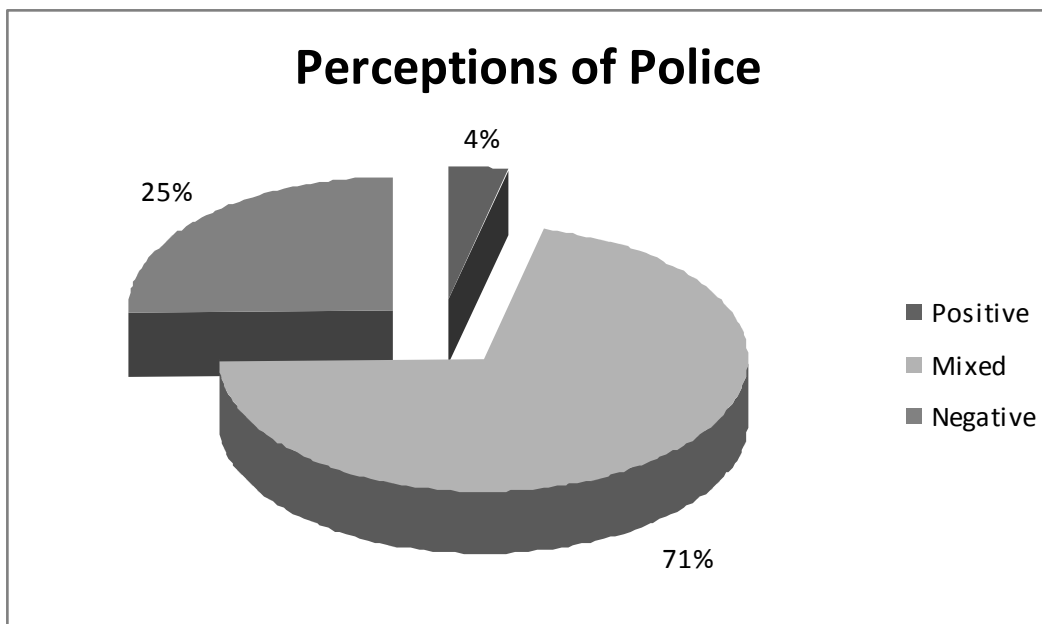


8.10.4 There has been work done on this in other parts of the country – a number of years ago a CD (Give police a Chance) was distributed by Derbyshire Police in the East and East Midlands region as part of a Home Office Project, and there has been research on the cultural training needs of police. This idea has been shared with Police in South Somerset and a copy of the CD was sent to Yeovil Police station.

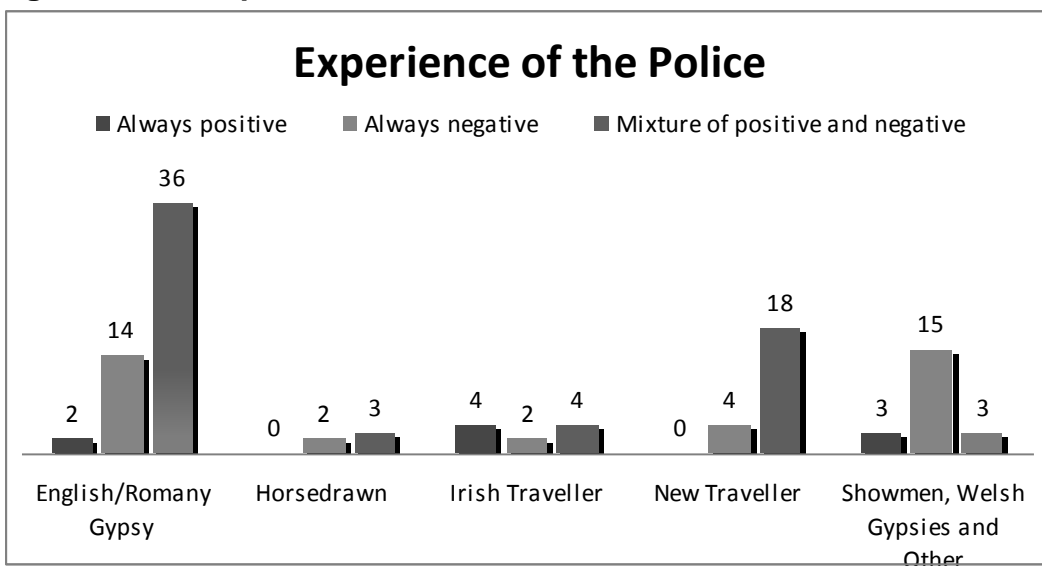
**The research team would recommend that information from the GTAA is used by agencies to understand more about Gypsy and Traveller perceptions. This can inform ongoing diversity training for all agencies who deal with Gypsies and Travellers.**

8.10.5 Ninety-two (92) respondents said that they had had dealings with police. Whilst the majority had mixed views on how police were perceived, 4% (4 respondents) said they were always positive but a quarter suggested that Police were always negative. One must note that more respondents gave perceptions of Police (107 people answered this question) than had had dealings with police.

**Figure 8.10.5 Perceptions of Police**



**Figure 8.10.6 Experience of Police**



8.10.6 Suggestions for police from Gypsies and Travellers in the survey included:

- Listen to us – don't judge
- Don't pick on young men and boys
- Have more training about our culture
- Get more Gypsies and Travellers into police force

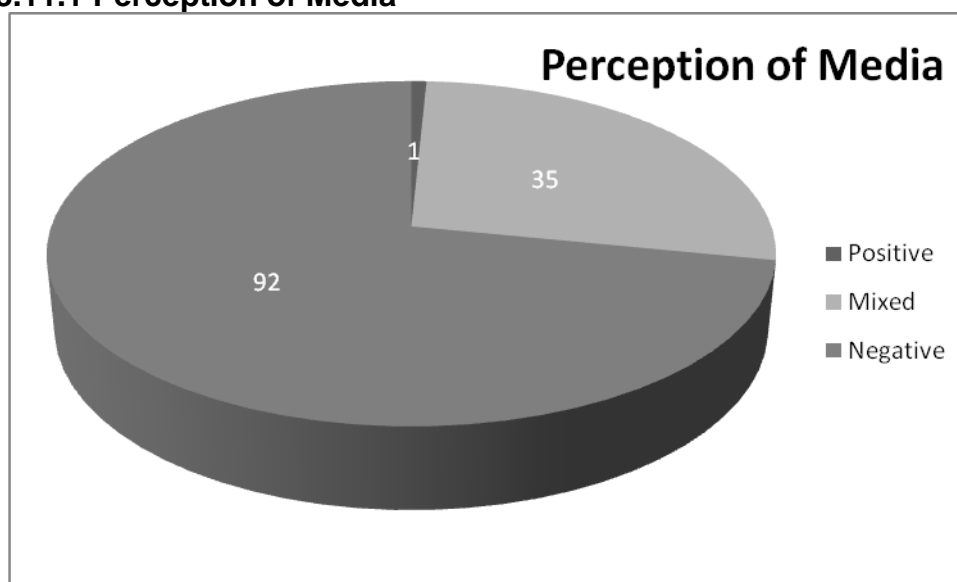
8.10.7 In a response to the above findings, a representative from the force said:

*“Avon and Somerset Police are robust in dealing with hate crime incidents and we would welcome opportunities to engage with the Gypsy and Travellers in Somerset to further develop and improve the levels of confidence and reassurance amongst them. Staff have regular training on Diversity issues, be it e-learning or formal presentations but we are always looking for opportunities to build upon this and would look to use this process as an opportunity to review our current and future approaches to such training.”*

## 8.11 Media

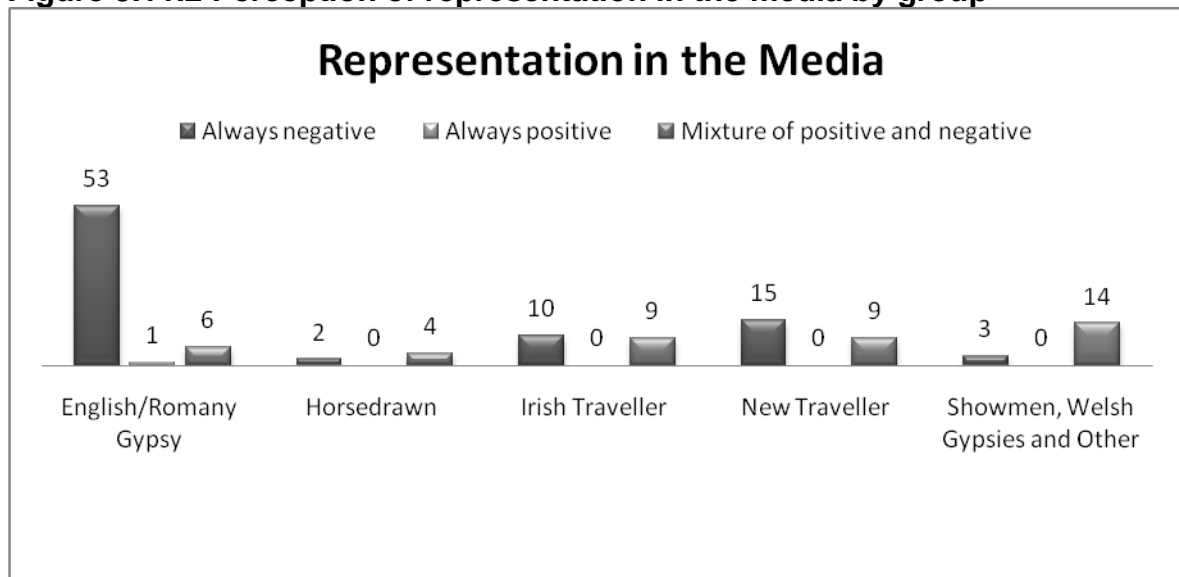
8.11.1 When asked for perceptions of media representation of Gypsies and Travellers, 128 respondents gave their view.

**Figure 8.11.1 Perception of Media**



8.11.2 The picture was mostly negative; however there has been some good coverage of events recently on BBC South West and the Politics Show in the region.

**Figure 8.11.2 Perception of representation in the media by group**



## 9. FOCUS ON: YOUNG PEOPLE

### 9.1 Background

9.1.1 The Young Persons focus group was facilitated by Sarah Cemlyn with extensive involvement from the Children's Society Children's Participation Project, and took place in a community venue in Taunton. The session built on the work of the Children's Society over many years with Gypsy and Traveller young people, including work to support their participation.

9.1.2 The full detail of the focus group debate is included in the appendices. This brief chapter aims to pull out key issues and themes that were mentioned and then to make recommendations on necessary policy responses.

### 9.2 Accommodation

9.2.1 There was a diversity of perceptions and views among the group about living on sites, reflecting varied experiences. Three young New Travellers, whose parents had planning permission for a single family or bender site, expressed many positive views of their accommodation. Slightly younger Romany Gypsy children, who had moved from a house where they had very difficult experiences back onto an unauthorised site, also shared positive views about being on this site concerning space, freedom to express themselves and engage in simple, enjoyable activities, and not being 'stuck' inside a house.

**Travellers Education Service should link up with the Children's Society and young Travellers in Somerset to disseminate these positive views of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation through the school curriculum and cultural heritage events in the County to help 'settled' children and their families understand the importance of site accommodation to the Gypsy and Traveller way of life.**

**District councils and local politicians should hear these voices of young Travellers as support for providing appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset.**

9.2.2 The young people also talked about the disadvantages of living on different kinds of sites. One conversation referred to the sites being remote, far from towns, sometimes several miles from a bus stop, and not having their own transport.

**Council feasibility studies for future site locations must take account of the need for sites to be sustainable – near to transport, schools and shops. Government guidance on site design also refers to the need for appropriate locations.**

### 9.3 Community/Networks

9.3.1 Two New Traveller young people, who had moved respectively into a house and onto an authorised private site, looked back on the days of living on sites, which they had clearly enjoyed in the past, but considered they were not so sociable and enjoyable any more. They also attributed this to many people having succumbed to the pressure of being moved on all the time and having moved into houses.

The theme of isolation and loss of networks that can be found in some of these extracts, to some extent reflects research by Smith (2004) about the problems that young New Travellers in isolated situations could experience. However this theme must also be put in context of the strong positive experiences related to friendships that some of the young people expressed.

**Travellers Education Service was commended by survey respondents as an organisation that had helped them. TES and other agencies like the Children's Society should be supported by the district and county councils to help facilitate these vital networks, particularly for those who feel they have had to move into a house and have suffered a subsequent detachment from the wider travelling community.**

### 9.4 Facilities and amenities on sites

9.4.1 In terms of physical disadvantages, one young Gypsy family referred to having no gas, electricity or water on their site, having to carry all their water and go to relatives for personal washing. The impact of reduced amenities on some self-provided sites is to a considerable extent dependent on the season and also the weather, being greatly exacerbated in the winter months. The snow and cold temperatures experienced in early 2010 had a considerable impact in relation to keeping warm, and also health.

**The point on lack of facilities on sites has been made previously in the report. At a minimum, the district councils, or the county council should take responsibility for facilitating basics, such as water supply. Even where a site is unauthorised, but is 'tolerated' by the local authorities, there should be a duty of care to help facilitate water supply.**

### 9.5 Discrimination and harassment in housing

9.5.1 One young Gypsy family had experienced serious harassment and racist abuse while living in a house prior to moving out onto an unauthorised site. The children also conveyed the difficulties the family experienced in trying to engage assistance from the council or police in addressing these issues. This led to the family moving to an unauthorised site where the children felt happier (despite the insecure accommodation), with freedom to play outside, and in the safety of living with just their family.



**Councils, housing associations and police should take steps to investigate cases of discrimination and harassment where they are reported. Agencies will each have their own policies for dealing with such incidents but there should be some consistency across the County area.**

**There is an existing example of good practice in the county. The Community Justice Panel in South Somerset provides a restorative justice approach in response to referrals from partner agencies. Partner agencies who can refer include South Somerset District Council, Mendip, Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Police, Yarlington Homes, Victim Support and the Crown Prosecution Service. Councils who are not already partners in the Community Justice Panel should consider signing up so they can refer cases as appropriate.**

## **9.6 Education**

9.6.1 The young people were asked about whether they went to school, and what they liked best and did not like about their school or college. The main themes in the responses covered firstly, attendance at school and stories about the challenges in accessing school as a Traveller, secondly views about the school as a whole and its ethos, thirdly likes and dislikes about particular subjects or teachers, and fourthly experiences related to being a Gypsy or a Traveller in school. Almost all the young people currently attended either school or college, depending on their age. One or two young people had started school late, and one had received home schooling when away from school.

9.6.2 *Feedback from schools* In a comment on the importance of consistent support and feedback from the education system for children who are away travelling, this young person went on to describe how she was set work which she completed but which the school did not then mark – this was very demotivating.

**Schools should ensure that work given to Travellers on the road is marked and appropriate feedback is given.**

### *9.6.3 Getting to school*

One young New Traveller explained the great lengths she had gone to as a younger child to get to school and back each day, when she moved from living with her father to living with her mother. The journey to school involved a long walk to the bus stop and a long bus ride to the school – a journey which took several hours each way.

**District councils should continue to assess suitability and sustainability of sites for their proximity to public transport or to local schools.**

### *9.6.4 Positive about school*

Two Travellers in the focus group were extremely positive about their schools.

**Schools who work well with Gypsy and Traveller communities should disseminate their good practice more widely. The Traveller Education Service should identify young people, perhaps through the Children's Society, to act as 'ambassadors' to other young travelling children to promote continued school education.**

## **9.7 Discrimination and bullying**

9.7.1 The young people were asked if they had even been bullied or discriminated against as a Traveller or a Gypsy, where it happened, and whether anyone helped them deal with it.

9.7.2 A small minority of the young people had generally escaped experiences of racism.

However when previously asked what they did not like about their school, bullying and racism was a recurrent theme for many, and therefore these two topics merged to a considerable extent (Lloyd and Stead 2001). As reported in other studies, bullying and racism were not just experienced from other children but also from adults, including those in authority such as teachers, and members of the public. One young Gypsy family described abusive experiences from a shopkeeper and a school bus driver, clearly identifying different treatment from different individuals.

9.7.3 Persistent experiences of discrimination and the resultant fear of prejudice and hostility could present significant barriers to use of services, as in the case of a young woman with a disabled child who could not use a local children's centre for these reasons.

9.7.4 For younger children, especially if linked with experiences of racism in their home neighbourhood, as for the family of Gypsy siblings, racism at school as well could cause serious developmental damage.

9.7.5 Strategies and policies in dealing with discrimination and bullying are important – such as a whole school approach. However in a number of examples in the focus group, it was conveyed how important a sympathetic teacher could be in providing support. However, where this support is not institutionalised within the school, it is vulnerable to withdrawal when individuals leave. Three young women spontaneously identified the Children's Society worker as someone they could go to in difficult situations. The focus group event itself reflected the strong engagement of the Children's Society with Gypsy and Traveller young people, and the work they undertake to enable these young people to have a voice and participate in activities and debates.

9.7.6 One interview with a young woman and her child illustrated the kind of support to individuals that the Children's Society also provides. They had supported her over more than a decade. This involved provision as a child when a playbus was brought on site (National Playbus Association nd), and more recent and intensive support in

relation to pregnancy and childbirth, homelessness following a house fire, and gaining treatment for her disabled child.

**Instances of discrimination and bullying can have a long-term damaging effect. Whilst the support of individuals is important, it is vital that institutions have whole organisation approaches so there is a consistent method of providing support to Gypsies and Travellers and dealing with bullying.**

**There are clear and unambiguous duties for statutory authorities to promote good race relations; this includes the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Councils, health, schools and police should review their policies, procedures, implementation, and training programmes for staff to ensure that cases of discrimination and bullying are dealt with efficiently.**

**Where support systems work already, support (financial and otherwise) should be provided by councils to enable the expertise of organisations like the Children's Society to continue.**

## **9.8 Future aspirations**

9.8.1 Training or further or higher education was identified by most of the young people as necessary to their plans. Some also acknowledged the need for advice, and one pointed to the importance of contacts when setting up in business.

9.8.2 Some young people clearly identified that they wanted to live on a stable site, with their family and /or with their friends. The obstacles that were referred to throughout the interviews included the current lack of access to basic facilities, the threat of being moved on, the prejudice they encountered, and the impact on policies and practice towards Gypsies and Travellers.

**Advice and support on further education and training should be provided by agencies like Connexions to help guide young Travellers to find the support and training they need to fulfil future career aspirations.**

**Secure site accommodation should be provided to meet evidenced need and basic facilities, such as access to water, should be facilitated even on unauthorised sites where they are tolerated. There is a clear message from young people that lack of accommodation and facilities acts as a barrier to career and educational attainment.**

**All officers from statutory agencies involved in service provision for Gypsies and Travellers should read the full detail of the young person's focus group – there is far more rich detail than has been included here. The focus group detail has been moved to the appendix upon request from the client, but the research team recommends that the detail is read in full for a better understanding of the complex issues.**

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## **9.9 Conclusions**

9.9.1 Young people had strong feelings about culture and lifestyle, school and accommodation. They showed that they wanted to be treated like other young people and not have assumptions made about them because of who they were. Ideas were suggested on what they would like to see on an ideal site, and these have been included in chapter five of this report on future provision of sites.

## 10. FOCUS ON: NEW TRAVELLERS

### 10.1 Background

10.1.1 The focus group was arranged and co-convened by staff from the Robert Barton Trust utilising their extensive networks and long-term contact with New Travellers across the study area. Margaret Greenfields (BNU) and Emma Nuttall of FFT facilitated the session (which was also supported by Traveller staff of the Robert Barton Trust) which took place in the downstairs meeting space/café of the Robert Barton Trust offices in Glastonbury on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2010. The Robert Barton Trust was one of a number of organisations and individuals involved in New Traveller support and research in the area.

10.1.2 The core theme of the focus group was attitudes towards types of accommodation and in particular the attitude towards use of community land trusts as a mechanism for site provision for New Travellers.

### 10.2 Accommodation (current)

10.2.1 Travellers talked about the need for security of accommodation, but also of the need for some of 'living under the radar'. One participant stated they had been living on a green lane for about 15 years but wouldn't identify the location to anyone for fear of eviction or others moving onto the site and drawing attention to it. There were also mentions of a site being sustainable as long as the horse grazing was available.

**Unofficial sites and traditional stopping places could form an important part of a strategy to meet accommodation need. A variety of options for future accommodation should be explored, including investigation into opening up traditional stopping places to allow Travellers to stop for a while, graze horses and then move on, as appropriate.**

10.2.2 The shortage of authorised sites meant that some parents reported that in addition to well-recognised disadvantages (e.g disrupted education) experienced by children on unauthorised sites, other potentially negative impacts (such as social isolation) could affect their children when families had been forced to live alone or with only one or two other people (in order that they were relatively invisible if residing at traditional sites, or to avoid 'large party-type' sites'). This theme of 'isolation' and disconnection with the wider community is reminiscent of sentiments shared by the Young People in their focus group.

### 10.3 Accommodation preferences

10.3.1 In the main although participants did not express a clear preference for mono-cultural sites, some discussion occurred about the different cultures amongst Travelling people. Essentially the comment about the different needs and wants of different groups of travelling people and the findings from GTAA's and other research evidence which suggests that 'ethnic' / 'traditional' Gypsies and Travellers prefer to

live amongst their own communities would suggest that sites explicitly for New Travellers would be preferred although if Green Lanes and traditional halting places were opened up inevitably some form of sharing of space would occur.

10.3.2 Although all participants clearly identified that they wished to live on a site, significant variation existed in relation to accommodation preference. Participants were eager to point out that a 'one size fits all' approach to accommodation could cause undue constraints for members of the diverse communities.

10.3.3 The horse-drawn Travelling community whilst recognising that they are in some ways regarded as more 'picturesque' by both members of the public and potentially more likely to be tolerated by local authorities or officialdom are confronted by particular difficulties. Not only are busy roads hazardous to horses and a number of routes do not offer appropriately broad lay-bys for halting, but some individuals had experienced particular problems over evictions when police or local authorities had failed to understand, or deliberately ignored the impacts of travelling with a live animal rather than a motorised vehicle.

10.3.4 Horse drawn Travellers had significant constraints on the distance which they could travel in a day before resting the animals and also in ensuring that once they were stopped (whether on lay-bys or using a Green Lane or farm land with the permission of the farmer, perhaps in exchange for a few days work) adequate safe grazing was available.

**Unauthorised encampments policies and procedures used by councils and police should be mindful of the particular issues related to horse drawn Travellers.**

10.3.5 Travel following traditional routes and then stopping on land owned by statutory agencies such as the National Trust and Forestry Agency were identified as a clear preference for people travelling in this manner. Particular concerns were expressed by horse-drawn Travellers that if a network of official transit sites were made available that not only would these not be suitable for people with horses but that they would be required to move onto such sites regardless of the practicalities of reaching such a location or the facilities thereon.

10.3.6 Amongst the particular participants in the focus group (although this may not hold true of all New Travellers) a very clear preference was found for utilising a mixture of private sites – perhaps on a short-term basis - and traditional halting places. The members of the focus group, drawing upon their extensive local knowledge and history of travelling were articulate both about the benefits of freely available traditional stopping places and the impacts on local people of Travellers being forced to move on continually or stop at inappropriate places where they caused nuisance to local housed residents.

10.3.7 In contrast to most 'traditional' Gypsies and Travellers who (in the experience of the research team) tend to record a preference for visitors stopping for a short time on a permanent pitch with relatives or friends but not having separate transit

pitches on sites; the New Traveller interviewees seemed well disposed to the concept of mixed transit/permanent provision at one location.

10.3.8 No participant wished to live on a traditional Gypsy/Traveller site with a preponderance of hard standing to grass. Horse-drawn focus group participants and those individuals whose favoured place of residence was on a Green Lane (which are typically long, thin sites) or on traditional halting spots whilst stating that a site only really needed:

*“a water supply... and space”*

**District councils should utilise the expertise of Travellers in Somerset. The Robert Barton Trust was a good point of contact and a conduit which councils could have used, but this has now had to close due to lack of funds. There are other individuals and agencies who may help councils to access local Traveller expertise in assessing a variety of site provision options, for instance Friends, Families and Travellers.**

**Councils should read the full details of the New Travellers focus group in the appendix. There is considerable thought given to sharing schemes, such as groups living in a wood in return for working there. More formal schemes utilising outside agencies to provide training were also discussed, as were the option of private sites with ‘low key’ management. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to accommodation provision for New Travellers and a degree of consultation with local Traveller experts will be required.**

## **10.4 Community Land Trusts (CLTs)**

10.4.1 The major part of the focus group discussion concerned CLTs. This topic was revisited on several occasions throughout the course of the session. The participants were all familiar with the concept of CLTs and wished to discuss the feasibility of such alternative modes of site delivery in their local area.

10.4.2 Discussions in relation to CLTs ranged from concerns about ‘policing’ of sites to other ‘management’ issues pertaining to the length of time for which a person could leave their pitch and travel without being considered to have given it up; how a CLT member could pass on their pitch to family members or friends if they wished to leave the group, and how and when visitor pitches or transit provision could be used; as well as the financial implications of setting up and servicing a site using the CLT route, particularly for those on low incomes.

10.4.3 A lot of the detailed debate on particular issues for the CLT is included in the appendices, for example issues of affordability, access, management, rent payments and so on. This shows the level of thought that has already gone into this idea from the New Traveller community and councils should continue to tap into that.

**District council officers should monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Mendip CLT scheme, to see whether such a scheme could be used in other districts in Somerset.**

## **10.5 Policing on Traditional Stopping Places**

10.5.1 Considerable debate occurred around the way in which policing of Traveller sites has often appeared to involve 'collective punishment' of an entire group when a small number of miscreants are responsible for bad behaviour (see further Cemlyn et. al., 2009) which can in turn lead to tension and a reluctance to engage with 'the authorities'.

10.5.2 It was proposed however that if Green Lanes were ever to become a collective resource for Travellers again – and were thus to be appreciated in the way in which 'the right to roam' has led to enhanced recognition of the value of land – then the Traveller community must take responsibility (in partnership with statutory authorities) in ensuring that the resource is not abused.

10.5.3 Whilst some individuals noted that it could potentially be difficult to deal with people who were breaking the rules, a general willingness to engage with the issue was noted if it was clear that only the 'rule-breakers' would be punished if the authorities were asked to take action.

**There is a level of willingness from Gypsies and Travellers to engage with police, but trust needs to be built up first so that Travellers have confidence that individual wrongdoers will be dealt with rather than whole sites evicted. The report has already referred to the need for training for all statutory agencies.**

**Whilst acknowledging that it would take considerable political will to reopen traditional halting places we would recommend that consideration be given to this proposal on at least a trial basis of one or two locations combined with a concentrated push on Traveller-sedentary community relations to see if complaints in relation to unauthorised sites diminish as well as monitoring whether the Traveller community are able to successfully self-Police such locations with the support of an experienced Gypsy Liaison Officer.**

## **10.6 Access to Health Care**

10.6.1 All the participants reported that they were generally in good physical health everyone reported experiencing difficulties with achieving appropriate medical care on at least one occasion. For New Travellers however, their fairly sophisticated knowledge of the legal right to access a GP, and the relatively easy availability of NHS Direct or walk-in A&E facilities have to some extent mitigated the worst of these problems. For individuals with children or those who were beginning to contemplate their older age, concerns about access to medical care were more pressing.



10.6.2 Other individuals noted the general hardship of living life 'on the road' and the way in which a relatively minor illness can become serious if for some reason it is impossible to remain warm and dry.

**The Robert Barton Trust (RBT) provided a service to Travellers to access laundry facilities, food and hot drinks on some days, and some training courses, as well as general support and advice. The Trust had also recently negotiated with a vet to provide free advice and some treatment for animals, and a dentist to also provide some free treatment for Travellers. The Robert Barton Trust has now had to close due to lack of funding. Whilst Travellers are resourceful and self-sufficient, councils and health agencies should be mindful of the gap in support that may result from the closure of charities like RBT. In the current economic climate it is recognised that financial assistance will be difficult, but other support and resources may be appropriate to help support residents' groups on council sites and representative groups such as the Romany Gypsy Advisory Group South West. Reacting to poor health and other issues will be more expensive for the authorities in the long run, than it would be to provide some funds to shore up preventative support through charitable agencies.**

10.6.3 Two out of the three women present had experienced poor health during their pregnancies and in both cases had found that medical personnel were reluctant to attend on site to deliver treatment (a complaint common to other 'types' of Traveller living at unauthorised locations). The problematic of delivery of health care to mobile or insecurely sited individuals has been a recurrent theme through decades of work with Gypsies and Travellers of all communities. The most effective way of managing care for this group has been found to be the provision of specialist outreach Traveller Health Visitor and health teams (see Cemlyn et. al., 2009). However, with the emphasis on 'mainstreaming' and cutbacks in provision such services have largely been phased out, despite the recent Department of Health emphasis on improving Gypsy/Traveller healthcare and the Pacesetters Initiatives which focus on these communities.

**In the absence of a specialist health team in the locality we would recommend that discussion takes place with local primary health care providers to continue to improve cultural awareness training for health staff and advise on the legal and ethical duty (as long as conditions are not unduly hazardous) to attend a patient in need who is resident on a site.**

10.6.4 A number of participants made explicit reference to the impact of environmental factors on health, noting that the closure of many traditional sites had led to residence at less than desirable locations which could potentially have a negative effect on their own health and that of other vulnerable Travellers. Poor site location and contamination were key issues.

## **10.7 Impact of living on a site on education and employment**

10.7.1 In response to the question of whether residence on a site had impacted on educational and employment issues, participants reported mixed experiences. For a number of respondents who were employed in the relatively self-supporting 'festival circuit' other than when they experienced eviction, site residence had not been particularly problematic. However, in common with other groups of Travellers, being known to live at a site could act as a barrier to accessing training courses or entering into employment in mainstream occupations.

A common tactic (see Greenfields, 2008 and the forthcoming ITMB report, 2010) to ensure that being a Traveller does not act as a covert barrier to education or employment is to use the address of a friend or relative when applying for work – a finding noted within studies of other 'traditional' Gypsies and Travellers access to employment.

## **10.8 Conclusion**

10.8.1 The issues and views in the group varied and whilst there was a willingness to engage with ideas like the Community Land Trust (witnessed not just in the focus group, but also in the involvement with Travellers in the Mendip proposals for CLTs) there were still concerns on the details of how such arrangements might work in practice. The CLT proposal has only recently been approved by the district council and it will take some time to see how this idea works – both for the community and for the councils in meeting identified need.

## 11. FOCUS ON: WOMEN AND HEALTH

### 11.1 Background

11.1.1 The focus group was arranged with the assistance of Sally Woodbury who is the health outreach worker for Friends Families and Travellers, based in the South West and facilitated by Margaret Greenfields (BNU). The focus group took place at Frome Community Library as it was understood that this was a convenient location for several local (Romany) participants. In addition, two Irish Traveller women were able to reach Frome with relative ease. The group met on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

11.1.2 Both physical and mental health concerns were discussed within the focus group but no attempt has been made to separate out the 'types' of health condition within the discussion as it became evident (and see further Matthews, 2008 and Parry et. al., 2004) that a complex interplay existed between the psychological well-being of the participants and their families and their accommodation status. Environmental problems associated with poor quality sites were reported as exacerbating a range of health conditions (see below) and in turn anxiety associated with residence in over-crowded and unhealthy accommodation or where fear of eviction existed, appeared to reverberate across many domains of ill-health, increasing the likelihood of depression and anxiety for individuals who were unable to see a way out of the accommodation related difficulties.

### 11.2 Accommodation – impact on health

11.2.1 Two of the more mature women referred to the stress they experienced in their current situation, with particular emphasis laid on their concerns for their family members, a theme which emerged strongly in Richardson, et. al., (2007) where it was found that Gypsy and Traveller women were particularly likely to neglect their own health whilst taking care of the physical and emotional needs of their spouses, children and (often) grandchildren. Parry et. al. (2004) emphasised that anxiety over accommodation issues was implicated in many cases of depression amongst members of the travelling communities.

11.2.2 Thus the planning status of sites (for example whether authorised, unauthorised or resident on road-side locations) was inextricably bound up in the women's health narratives, and in examples they gave which drew upon the experiences of their friends and relatives. For one family living on an unauthorised private site, not only were they suffering from stress "*nerves*" as a result of the constant anxiety about whether they would obtain planning permission "*when you try to go to sleep its going through your head all night, like what's going to happen if we do get put out*", or if they failed to win such permission whether they could afford to find the finances to "*put it [the site] back to grazing*".

11.2.3 For residents on a local authority site, conditions were particularly problematic as the site was badly maintained and over-crowded. The number of people crowded together in a relatively small place formed an additional source of conflict between residents and the local authority, as unauthorised 'doubling up' was occurring on

some pitches where married children who were unable to find an alternative pitch were moving back to live with their parents to avoid being repeatedly evicted or in some cases after having tried living in a flat. When the local authority enforced eviction, not only the young people concerned, but also their parents were likely to experience exacerbated physical and mental health effects.

11.2.4 The risk of injury associated with falls on poorly repaired pathways, or where lights did not exist (for example on some public sites and for those at road-side locations) was the subject of considerable debate. Most participants were aware of such problems existing at run-down local authority provision. Indeed the woman who worked as a health advocate had recently had to support an elderly person who had sustained a severe injury at a local authority site.

**The County Council should target the remainder of its £50,000 capital budget for sites on those where disrepair is so bad that injuries have occurred; such as in the above example.**

### 11.3 Contact with Health Service Providers

11.3.1 Participants were asked to consider how accessible they found current medical services – and whether they were able to provide examples of good practice in their locality.

11.3.2 The absence of a dedicated Traveller health service was noted with regret and also the loss (through redundancy or retirement) of experienced personnel who had both cultural knowledge and experience (perhaps developed over many years) of working with Gypsy and Traveller communities. Staff coming from such a background (e.g specialist health visitors), not only can provide care such as advice on urgent medical conditions, but are potentially able to act as a conduit of information, and assist with accessing a range of services for community members as well as acting to educate their colleagues on Gypsy and Traveller cultures.

**Accordingly the role of community health advocates or specialist health staff are important in restoring trust in services or in communicating what is required of both health professionals and Gypsies and Travellers in a local area. Public health service agencies should continue to ensure that Gypsies and Travellers are not adversely affected, and continue training community nurses or other specialist medical staff in Gypsy and Traveller culture and traditions.**

11.3.3 In common with New Traveller interviewees, the participants reported that attempting to obtain 'on site' treatment could be especially problematic, relating to the unwillingness of health personnel to attend at a location which does not have a clear post-code or which is difficult to access – the very places in fact where many Gypsy and Traveller sites are located.

11.3.4 There was extensive discussion (full details of the focus group are in the appendices) of preventative health. The debate for women around screening and

immunisation programmes, as well as in relation to child birth and gynaecological issues, was around the need for cultural sensitivity; for example understanding that a male doctor would not necessarily be appropriate at the birth of a child. For men, the issue of preventative medicine focused on keeping concerns to themselves and being reluctant to go and see the doctor.

**It is recommended that a preventative health education programme (which could include the promotion of screening) should be developed across Somerset and the study region utilising opportunities to access Male Gypsies and Travellers at Priddy Fair and other local gatherings. The relatively low cost of taking a mobile unit to a fair is likely to be off-set in terms of savings in long-term health care for individuals who become seriously ill and are not 'picked up' until they are experiencing significant rates of morbidity or premature mortality.**

#### **11.4 Cultural Awareness of Gypsy/Traveller issues (health care providers)**

11.4.1 Although discussions on cultural awareness were to some extent embedded within a number of topics considered within the focus group, on several occasions participants raised the issue of particular examples of poor practice or misunderstanding by health, social care and other public sector officials which acted as a barrier to engagement. A number of examples are given by Gypsies and Travellers in the detailed focus group notes in the appendices. Most of the examples centre upon a lack of cultural awareness on behalf of some health workers which can result in unintended racism, discrimination and generally can cause great offence.

**We would strongly recommend that the simplest way of overcoming the difficulties reported in the women and health focus group is to provide high quality cultural awareness training for front line staff. Such training and a range of information sources are provided by a number of charities and voluntary sector Traveller and Gypsy support agencies, with training programmes delivered in the vast majority of cases by experienced Gypsy and Traveller community members. Monitoring and review of existing training programmes for health workers in Somerset will help to evaluate the implementation of training in daily practices.**

**Clearly defined information sources and access to well respected and networked community health advocates or liaison officers embedded within local areas, will also assist in minimising cultural difficulties which act as a barrier to good community relations and take-up of services.**

## 11.5 Other issues

11.5.1 The detailed focus group notes in the appendices also cover the subject of living in a house and the impact which this can have for nerves and depression amongst Travellers. This ties in with the theme of 'isolation' from the community in the previous two focus groups and the importance of appropriate forms of accommodation (sites) where there is an aversion to bricks and mortar.

11.5.2 The theme of bereavement was also discussed and health workers in Somerset should read the focus group detail to understand the importance of this process and the support that is needed from family members.

11.5.3 Although the focus group covered most areas of health as core topics, it was noted by two participants in passing that a problem exists amongst some Gypsies and Travellers in relation to the sharing of medication on the grounds that if a tablet or liquid medication is effective for one individual with a particular condition then it should help someone else with a similar health problem. In part it is believed that this sharing of medicine relates to concerns over having to wait for appointments, deal with lack of cultural awareness and hurdles to accessing treatment, or simply the inconvenience of having find time to attend at a surgery. This finding supports other anecdotal evidence emerging from recent health reports and research into the role of community health practitioners (Greenfields, 2008; Matthews, 2009)

**Information about the dangers of such practices should be disseminated through the auspices of trained community health advocates, working in partnership with culturally aware medical staff.**

11.5.4 Whilst participants were generally agreed that in the sense of physical health, access to treatment is now easier to access than in the past, they considered that the stresses of their lives had increased dramatically in recent years leading to poorer mental health for their community at large.

## **12. IDEAS FOR SITE DELIVERY: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

### **12.1 Introduction**

12.1.1 Strategic regional planning targets for Gypsy and Traveller site provision have been revoked by the new Coalition Government, Circular 1/06 is going to be abolished and the landscape for making decisions on how and where to deliver new Gypsy sites has changed drastically in the last three months. The new Government is looking for innovation and it has suggested some ideas itself – such as the use of incentives to minimise local objection. We have yet to see the detail on some of these suggestions but it is advisable for the Somerset councils to proactively engage with the Government to see what possible finance or support it can lever in through an incentive based system.

### **12.2 Understanding different cultural needs**

12.2.1 All too often the debate over new sites becomes an ideological battle over land use and who has the traditional right to access land. There are some sacred cows – such as ‘the green belt’ which seem to be viewed as needing protecting, even from transitory use where the land is returned to its former state. Something that can help here is a method of seeing the value of land to a range of different cultures and viewpoints.

12.2.2 Cultural heritage assessments may be a useful approach for planners to take on board the importance of certain pieces of land and areas from a Traveller community point of view. The importance of Gypsy and Traveller culture in Somerset is recognised in certain ways – for example Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month in June each year, and there were a number of events facilitated by Somerset councils and schools in 2010. However, this culture can be forgotten in strategic planning and housing systems. In examining the meaning of areas to Gypsy and Traveller culture it may be possible to find appropriate places for site development and at the same time embed cultural lessons in communication of ideas with the wider public. Cultural landscape assessments have been an important part in heritage planning practice in Australia, particularly in understanding the value of spaces to Aboriginal communities in consultation on new planning such as for wind turbines (Auswind, 2007). Although cultural assessment in the Australian context is being used to consult with communities on the impact of new development in their area, the premise of understanding cultural values could be translated, as appropriate, to better understand the need to be near certain spaces and areas for communities, such as Travellers in Somerset.

### **12.3 Commons Sharing**

12.3.1 Commons sharing can be a very informal approach to sharing common resources such as community commons in villages, wooded areas and so on. The GTAA survey asked the question of New Travellers about commons sharing, however it must be noted that a formal survey structure is by its very nature going to

try and formalise knowledge on an informal arrangement. Some of the responses show the exasperation in being asked a question which relates to an ideal that many feel they are trying to achieve anyway but are being stopped from doing by planning and anti-social behaviour laws. One respondent replied “Duh!” to this question to demonstrate that it was not exactly a new idea to the travelling communities. However, it is not something that every single Traveller would want to be involved in, particularly if made official and prescribed through the council and various agencies, rather than fluid and informal arrangements used traditionally. The focus group in April teased out the differing views particularly in relation to the more formal Community Land Trust scheme being developed by Mendip.

12.3.2 There are a range of models that can be examined for common land sharing, and indeed decision-making and power sharing. Whilst Ostrom (1990) pays attention to traditional models<sup>41</sup> and potential but unsatisfactory alternatives<sup>42</sup> before debating other methods, such as the Turkish fishing sites rota which draws on collective action to share Common Pool Resources (CPR). Buck (1998, pg 35) provides some design principles for sustainable regimes on sharing the commons:

- Clearly defined boundaries
- Operational rules congruent with local conditions
- Collective choice arrangements
- Monitoring
- Graduated sanctions
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Rights to organise regimes
- Nested enterprises

12.3.3 And for multiple use commons (which may be the case for some informal arrangements on common land that could be used by Travellers for a brief period for stopping and for grazing, but then used by other communities locally for other purposes at other times):

- Resource domain must be able to support all uses
- All users must be represented
- Knowledge of operational rules must be shared

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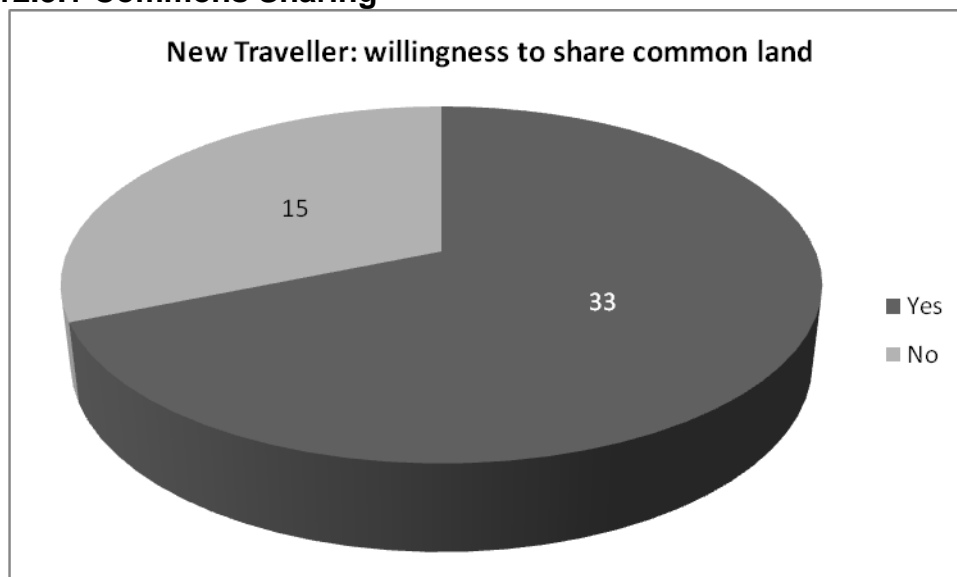
<sup>41</sup> The Tragedy of the Commons, The Prisoner's Dilemma and the Logic of Collective Action

<sup>42</sup> Leviathan as the only way, Privatisation as the only way, and 'the only way'



12.3.4 In the bespoke New Traveller GTAA survey (green form) 33 New Traveller respondents said they would be interested in commons sharing.

**Figure 12.3.1 Commons Sharing**



12.3.5 It must be absolutely clear that this question on commons sharing was bespoke for the New Travellers survey. It was not asked of any other segment of the sample population. Indeed during a consultation on the first draft of the GTAA report it was suggested by a Romany Gypsy representative that this type of accommodation would not be at all desirable for the Romany Gypsy community.

12.3.6 There were a range of comments from those who were interested and those who weren't. One can see from the diversity of comments below that there are issues about distinct communities – e.g. one person says they would be interested but only if commons sharing was for New Travellers only. This does not accord with broader notions of commons sharing – particularly the idea of multi-purpose sharing. It may be that some New Travellers find commons sharing appealing, but would only want to share at one time with other New Travellers and not with other Gypsy and Traveller groups. Some respondents shared ideas common in the Gypsy community of wanting to own their own land for their own site; again not compatible with the notion of commons sharing. However, it must be noted that some respondents were interpreting the question on commons sharing within a residential and formal context and that may account for the fact that some respondents said that they were not interested.

- Would prefer to decide issues by discussions with neighbours
- Would like to share with a community of friends
- Would like to share common land
- Would like to learn more. Open discussions with other Travellers
- Would ideally like to own/rent land as an autonomous cooperative group

- Would be willing to pay rent which would mean that a little bit of land belongs to me in the future
- Could share with other Travellers
- Duh!
- Happy to explore all options
- I like the idea of a group of people providing their own sites, but don't have funds to do this personally
- I think it would be useful to be able to manage and own a site between a few families. It would give a lot more security and peace of mind
- I want my own land
- I want to own enough land to get by and for those around me to do the same
- It is my preference because I enjoy giving as part of a community and is better rather than small family unit
- It would depend on the right people and commitment to make it work
- Land share or co-op
- NT's get harassed. Its for security and safety
- Provided it was for NT not for Gypsies or Irish Travellers
- Share access to green lanes with other responsible people
- Share the finances and responsibility
- The country as a whole should be brought back to a community based system
- The security in numbers. Making it financially viable
- Too much responsibility
- Unsure
- Would be prepared to share with friends

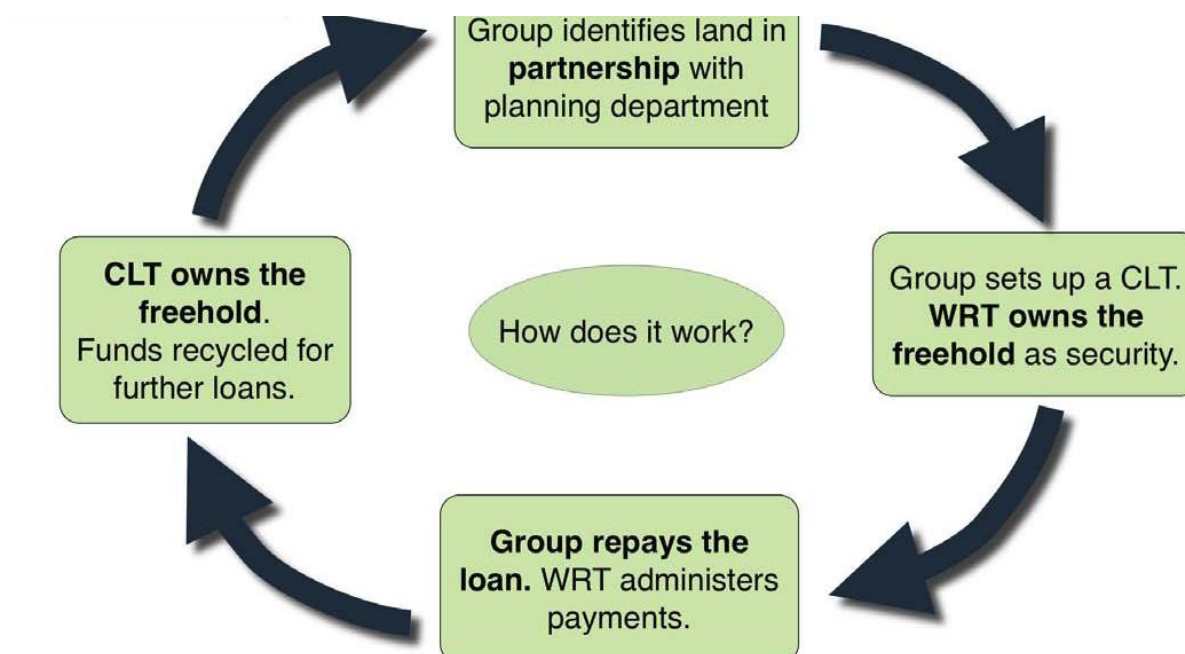
**Whilst informal arrangements of community land sharing may be appropriate for some Travellers, and councils may consider helping to open up traditional stopping places (see further [www.albionwayfarer.com](http://www.albionwayfarer.com)) there is a need for more formal arrangements for others.**

## **12.4 Community Land Trust (CLT)**

12.4.1 Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are emerging as one solution in a mix of responses to the need to provide more sites. Mendip District Council in Somerset are leading the way in implementing such a scheme and the council is on the verge of committing funds, despite the cuts in CLG grant programme having an effect on the availability of resources locally. CLTs were outlined in the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) as one option to further the social, economic and environmental interests of a local community by acquiring and managing land and other assets in order to:

- Provide a benefit to the local community
- Ensure that the assets are not sold or developed except in a manner which the trust's members think benefits the local community.

12.4.2 The scheme for Mendip is outlined in the diagram below:



(Adapted<sup>43</sup> from Mendip District Council Gypsy and Traveller Strategy 2010-2012, pg 68<sup>44</sup>)

12.4.3 More details are available at Appendix C in a copy of the Mendip District Council leaflet on CLTs.

12.4.4 Mendip District Council worked with Travellers and community organisations such as the Robert Barton Trust to develop a scheme to facilitate Gypsies and Travellers to purchase land at a reasonably low cost with a loan available through a specific funding vehicle. Travellers will need to develop business plans for proposals and the success of the scheme is also dependent on landowners coming forward to sell small parcels of land for sites. The land cannot be sold on for a profit but is, in perpetuity, held for the purposes of a Travellers site. Incentives for landowners to come forward are given (such as upfront deposit) and this falls in line with current Government thinking in this area of using incentives to deliver sites, rather than targets and regulation.

**The district councils should monitor and evaluate the CLT scheme at Mendip and should consider widening the scheme out if successful. Whilst the question on CLTs was bespoke for the New Travellers survey, and in addition there has been one set of feedback that this would not be an appropriate**

<sup>43</sup> The original diagram shows investment coming in from CLG grant, but this government grant programme was cut before money could be allocated to Mendip. Councillors have met recently with a mind to committing £100,000 to get the scheme started.

<sup>44</sup> WRT = Wessex Reinvestment Trust – see further [www.wessexrt.org](http://www.wessexrt.org) for further information on this and specifically Wessex Community Assets (WCA) programme for share offers which can finance purchase of an asset for a community and can offer a social and small financial return to investors.

**option for Romany Gypsies, the notion of affordable loans to allow Gypsies and Travellers to purchase land to develop their own site should be investigated further to see what aspects of the scheme might be widened out (a) beyond Mendip and (b) beyond the New Traveller community if appropriate and if other communities show an interest.**

## **12.5 Group Housing**

12.5.1 Another more structured approach, but not yet mainstream in England, is the 'Group Housing' model for Irish Travellers and Gypsies that has been piloted and now has a number of established schemes up and running. A number of chalet style properties are grouped together around facilities such as a paddock and stables for horses along with, say, a workshop. The GTAA survey asked Gypsies and Travellers whether they had heard of Group Housing and whether they liked the sound of it as a potential future type of accommodation. There was some interest, with a few respondents saying that this sounded like a good idea. Most Gypsies and Travellers seemed to prefer, though, more traditional smaller family sites.

12.5.2 In the GTAA survey, 48 respondents said that they had heard of Group Housing, but even more than that had a comment to make on the idea of it as a possible model for future provision (64 respondents commented). Nearly half of the 64 respondents who made a comment (31) said a very definite 'no' to the idea, largely because the accommodation preference is for small family owned sites. However, of those who were open to the idea, the following comments were made:

- Nice
- It would be good on small sites of about 8 pitches
- It sounds okay
- It could work for me
- In the right place with the right people its ok
- Good idea. Depends who is going to be living there
- Good idea for those that want to settle
- Good for large families that want to live near each other
- Very good
- Thinks it sounds nice
- Sounds ok
- I think its good, but I'd never want a house again
- I think it would be a good idea
- I think it would work, I would like it
- Excellent
- Brilliant, I'd have all my family there

12.5.3 There were some positive comments, but certainly not overwhelming support for the idea of Group Housing based on the model in Ireland where low level accommodation is clustered around paddock and stable area with, in some cases, workshop areas too. No avenue of site provision should be ruled out for the future, but this is probably not a model for immediate site proposals in Somerset.

## 12.6 Site Management

12.6.1 Discussion is already underway between the county and districts regarding selling county owned sites to the districts. At a time when public services are being encouraged to group together to save money (e.g. place based budgets) there is a possibility that site management in Somerset could become fragmented. In other areas of the country there are examples where districts collaborate services for Gypsies and Travellers. Often these are multi-agency too, incorporating Police, health, education and site management. In Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire these multi-agency units claim to be providing a better service to the community and they are also saving public money with, in some instances, greatly reduced spend on unauthorised encampment budgets. It may be possible for Somerset councils to think about retaining a co-ordinated approach across the county to enable greater efficiency and a more satisfactory service.

**The research team has already made recommendations on the need for collaborative consistent approaches to Gypsy and Traveller services across the County. Warnings on loss of control over access to and quality of sites in the event of site disposal by the County have also been made. These are reiterated again here.**

## 12.7 Conclusion

12.7.1 There are a number of innovative approaches that can be used. Mendip is already leading the way with its Community Land Trust, but there are other more informal methods of using traditional stopping places or opening up commons for transitory use by multiple different groups. Innovation will tend to come from the community and lines of communication should be kept open for consultation in the future.

## 13. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 13.1 Introduction

This report has made a number of observations and recommendations throughout the report. The main recommendations are summarised again here.

### 13.2 Accommodation Need: Pitch requirements

**13.2.1** The report has outlined a need for 131 additional pitches across the study area between 2010 and 2015. The detail and stratification by district was provided in chapter six.

An estimated 64 further pitches will be required by 2020.

**13.2.2** Transit provision is needed for around 100 caravans by 2015, this is distributed by district in chapter six.

**13.2.3** At least 4 Showmen's yards will be needed by 2015.

#### 13.2.4 Summary of pitch requirement by district

	<b>Pitches 2010 - 2015</b>	<b>Pitches 2015 - 2020</b>	<b>Transit Pitches</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	69	24	80
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	24	10	5
<b>South Somerset</b>	10	8	10
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	25	19	5
<b>West Somerset</b>	2	3	0
	<b>131<sup>45</sup></b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>

### 13.3 Data Collection and Monitoring

**13.3.1** It is recommended that district councils liaise further with the county council to ensure that only caravans used for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation are included in caravan counts in the future. Information needs to be gathered on the extent to which pitches might be used by non Gypsy-Travellers and the impact needs to be examined of this on the pitch requirements.

<sup>45</sup> Due to rounding of figures during calculation (see table 6.2 in the main report) there is a difference of 1 between rows and columns in the main set of figures for 2010 – 2015 between the study area as a whole and the total of all districts. The collective calculation for the county results in a figure of 131; but when distributed by district the total is 130.

## **13.4 Planning**

**13.4.1** The research team recommends that more specific mention is made of Gypsy and Traveller schemes is made in the LIP process.

**13.4.2** The research team recommends that district councils explore the use of planning gain type agreements, as long as they are in existence, in an aim to ensure Gypsy and Traveller sites are included in new housing development schemes, where appropriate. This is particularly important when planning significant urban extensions.

## **13.5 Collaborative working**

**13.5.1** The research team recommends a place-based, county-wide approach to Gypsy and Traveller issues in Somerset, this can avoid duplication of services, identify gaps in services where needs have yet to be met, and look for the most cost efficient ways of working across the districts and between government tiers and with relevant agencies to deliver the most appropriate services to communities in Somerset.

**13.5.2** This GTAA should feed into a number of collaborative approaches and partnerships, for example Supporting People reviews, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments for health and the Somerset Safer Communities Group.

## **13.6 Disposal of council sites**

**13.6.1** It is recommended that county council works with districts on the disposal of sites and that any covenants, management agreements or planning conditions open to the councils are used to implement and monitor good quality provision of the stock which has up to now been in public ownership and management. This will have the effect of ensuring control over quality of provision, and access to affordable site accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers. Partners who buy or manage sites should be chosen according to a strong set of criteria; covenants and conditions need to be implemented and monitored.

## **13.7 Site management**

**13.7.1** There is a concern for residents' safety from fire on some of the council sites. The transit site entrance could exacerbate the situation if emergency services cannot easily find the place and if industrial materials line the roadway which could be flammable. The County Council should continue its work to assess fire safety on council sites and reports the outcomes and recommendations of this piece of work to the district councils so that future management arrangements, after the disposal of sites has taken place, can be

monitored to include fire safety arrangements where appropriate. The fire service can provide smoke detectors and other individual items, but there may be a need for councils to examine the need for hydrants, hoses and other robust methods of putting out larger fires on site.

**13.7.2** The County Council continues with its programme of capital investment whilst the sites remain in public ownership; but that focus is put on some of the issues raised by residents on the state of repair of concrete pitches and the damp in utility blocks.

**13.7.3** That a sign is put at the entrance point to the Westonzoyland site off the main access road, to help show visitors (and especially the emergency services) where the site is.

**13.7.4** Allocations policies and procedures should be consistently applied and monitored on council sites.

**13.7.5** Covenants of sale or management agreements must be included to ensure that sites remain accessible for Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset, even where ownership is transferred.

## **13.8 New Site Design and Location**

**13.8.1** The research team recommends that proposed sites, and site plans, are consulted on widely in the community as a whole, and that potential site residents' views on what facilities are necessary and desirable, and what would be affordable, are established by district councils during this consultation period.

**13.8.2** Council feasibility studies for future site locations must take account of the need for sites to be sustainable – near to transport, schools and shops. Government guidance on site design also refers to the need for appropriate locations. This is particularly important for young people who may have difficulties accessing school.

## **13.9 Site Facilities**

**13.9.1** The district councils, or the county council should take responsibility for facilitating basics, such as water supply. Even where a site is unauthorised, but is 'tolerated' by the local authorities, there should be a duty of care to help facilitate water supply.

## **13.10 Traditional stopping places**

**13.10.1** The research team recommends that further research is undertaken by the district councils, in conjunction with the county and with people who have already collated data in this area (Tony Thomson), to establish where traditional stopping



places have been banded up, why this action has been taken, by whom, and then to ascertain whether any action could be taken by councils to facilitate opening up of these places for transitory use, where appropriate.

**13.10.2** The research team recommends that the councils do not just look at pitch requirements for transit accommodation and think in terms of concrete municipal pitches, but instead consults with appropriate landowners and agencies on a mixed range of options for transit site provision for the future.

**13.10.3** Unofficial sites and traditional stopping places could form an important part of a strategy to meet accommodation need. A variety of options for future accommodation should be explored, including investigation into opening up traditional stopping places to allow Travellers to stop for a while, graze horses and then move on, as appropriate.

### **13.11 Commons Sharing**

**13.11.1** The district councils, planners and Police should collaborate to make sure that policies on issues like unauthorised encampments allow informal commons sharing if investigations show this is a viable option in Somerset to meet some need, particularly for transit provision.

**13.11.2** Whilst informal arrangements of community land sharing may be appropriate for some Travellers, and councils may consider helping to open up traditional stopping places (see further [www.albionwayfarer.com](http://www.albionwayfarer.com)) there is a need for more formal arrangements for others.

### **13.12 Community Land Trusts (CLTs)**

**13.12.1** District council officers should monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Mendip CLT scheme, to see whether such a scheme could be used in other districts in Somerset.

**13.12.2** The district councils should monitor and evaluate the CLT scheme at Mendip and should consider widening the scheme out if successful. Whilst the question on CLTs was bespoke for the New Travellers survey, and in addition there has been one set of feedback that this would not be an appropriate option for Romany Gypsies, the notion of affordable loans to allow Gypsies and Travellers to purchase land to develop their own site should be investigated further to see what aspects of the scheme might be widened out (a) beyond Mendip and (b) beyond the New Traveller community if appropriate and if other communities show an interest.

### **13.13 Unauthorised encampment policy**

**13.13.1** Data collection and monitoring of unauthorised encampments across the County should be improved so that key trends can be predicted and managed.

There is good practice on data collection in South Somerset, but this should be extended throughout the County.

**13.13.2** Unauthorised encampments policies and procedures used by councils and police should be mindful of the particular issues related to horse drawn Travellers.

### **13.14 Education and Training Opportunities for Gypsies and Travellers**

**13.14.1** The research team recommends that the district councils liaise with the Traveller Education Service and with local colleges and schools to see what support can be provided to improve the overall picture for literacy in the Gypsy and Traveller communities in Somerset.

**13.14.2** The research team also recommends that accommodation is seen as an essential part to good education and accessing schools. District councils should seek support from partner agencies during its process of identifying and developing future sites.

**13.14.3** Schools should ensure that work given to Travellers on the road is marked and appropriate feedback is given.

**13.14.4** District councils should continue to assess suitability and sustainability of sites for their proximity to public transport or to local schools.

**13.14.5** Schools who work well with Gypsy and Traveller communities should disseminate their good practice more widely. The Traveller Education Service should identify young people, perhaps through the Children's Society, to act as 'ambassadors' to other young travelling children to promote continued school education.

**13.14.6** Advice and support on further education and training should be provided by agencies like Connexions to help guide young Travellers to find the support and training they need to fulfil future career aspirations.

**13.14.7** Secure site accommodation should be provided to meet evidenced need and basic facilities, such as access to water, should be facilitated even on unauthorised sites where they are tolerated. There is a clear message from young people that lack of accommodation and facilities acts as a barrier to career and educational attainment.

### **13.15 Health**

**13.15.1** In the absence of a specialist health team in the locality we would recommend that discussion takes place with local primary health care providers to continue to improve cultural awareness training for health staff and advise on the

legal and ethical duty (as long as conditions are not unduly hazardous) to attend a patient in need who is resident on a site.

**13.15.2** The role of community health advocates or specialist health staff is important in restoring trust in services or in communicating what is required of both health professionals and Gypsies and Travellers in a local area. Public health service agencies should continue to ensure that Gypsies and Travellers are not adversely affected, and continue training community nurses or other specialist medical staff in Gypsy and Traveller culture and traditions.

**13.15.3** It is recommended that a preventative health education programme (which could include the promotion of screening) should be developed across Somerset and the study region utilising opportunities to access Male Gypsies and Travellers at Priddy Fair and other local gatherings. The relatively low cost of taking a mobile unit to a fair is likely to be off-set in terms of savings in long-term health care for individuals who become seriously ill and are not 'picked up' until they are experiencing significant rates of morbidity or premature mortality.

### **13.16 Training for Councillors and Council Staff**

**13.16.1** Somerset is home to two nationally recognised and respected Gypsy women – Maggie Smith-Bendell and Sally Woodbury, who both have worked with Lord Eric Avebury and advised Government agencies. Sally, along with Councillor Ric Pallister (again of national renown and respect) provide training through Local Government Knowledge (formerly the Improvement and Development Agency) and this has received positive feedback across the country. The Somerset councils should utilise its human resources and local experts and provide a training session for councillors (county, district and parish). This will help in future planning processes to reduce objection to site proposals through better cultural understanding and more communication.

### **13.17 Training for public agencies**

**13.17.1** The research team would recommend that information from the GTAA is used by agencies to understand more about Gypsy and Traveller perceptions. This can inform ongoing diversity training for all agencies who deal with Gypsies and Travellers.

**13.17.2** We would strongly recommend that the simplest way of overcoming the difficulties reported in the women and health focus group is to provide high quality cultural awareness training for front line staff. Such training and a range of information sources are provided by a number of charities and voluntary sector Traveller and Gypsy support agencies, with training programmes delivered in the vast majority of cases by experienced Gypsy and Traveller community members. Monitoring and review of existing training programmes for health workers in Somerset will help to evaluate the implementation of training in daily practices.

Clearly defined information sources and access to well respected and networked community health advocates or liaison officers embedded within local areas, will also assist in minimising cultural difficulties which act as a barrier to good community relations and take-up of services.

**13.17.3** Information about the dangers of practices such as sharing prescription medication should be disseminated through the auspices of trained community health advocates, working in partnership with culturally aware medical staff.

### **13.18 Police**

**13.18.1** There is a level of willingness from Gypsies and Travellers to engage with police, but trust needs to be built up first so that Travellers have confidence that individual wrongdoers will be dealt with rather than whole sites evicted. The report has already referred to the need for training for all statutory agencies.

**13.18.2** Whilst acknowledging that it would take considerable political will to reopen traditional halting places we would recommend that consideration be given to this proposal on at least a trial basis of one or two locations combined with a concentrated push on Traveller-sedentary community relations to see if complaints in relation to unauthorised sites diminish as well as monitoring whether the Traveller community are able to successfully self-Police such locations with the support of an experienced Gypsy Liaison Officer.

**13.18.3** A request from police, supported by the client council project managers, is that they should contribute to the discussion where individual sites are being proposed. Police, as a statutory agency, should be involved in major development decisions (much as other agencies such as education, health, highways and so on) to ascertain the viability and sustainability of a scheme to ensure safe communities. Police should not contribute to site discussions just because the proposed accommodation is for Gypsies and Travellers, if they would not ordinarily be consulted on other small scale housing development schemes. However, as part of a broader consultation with a range of appropriate agencies, then they should be involved, as and when appropriate.

### **13.19 Young Gypsies and Travellers**

**13.19.1** Travellers Education Service should link up with the Children's Society and young Travellers in Somerset to disseminate these positive views of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation through the school curriculum and cultural heritage events in the County to help 'settled' children and their families understand the importance of site accommodation to the Gypsy and Traveller way of life.

**13.19.2** District councils and local politicians should hear these voices of young Travellers as support for providing appropriate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset.

**13.19.3** All officers from statutory agencies involved in service provision for Gypsies and Travellers should read the full detail of the young person's focus group – there is far more rich detail than has been included here. The focus group detail has been moved to the appendix upon request from the client, but the research team recommends that the detail is read in full for a better understanding of the complex issues.

### **13.20 New Travellers**

**13.20.1** District councils should utilise the expertise of Travellers in Somerset. The Robert Barton Trust was a good point of contact and a conduit which councils could have used, but this has now had to close due to lack of funds. There are other individuals and agencies who may help councils to access local Traveller expertise in assessing a variety of site provision options, for instance Friends, Families and Travellers.

**13.20.2** Councils should read the full details of the New Travellers focus group in the appendix. There is considerable thought given to sharing schemes, such as groups living in a wood in return for working there. More formal schemes utilising outside agencies to provide training were also discussed, as were the option of private sites with 'low key' management. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to accommodation provision for New Travellers and a degree of consultation with local Traveller experts will be required.

### **13.21 Community Networks**

**13.21.1** Travellers Education Service was commended by survey respondents as an organisation that had helped them. TES and other agencies like the Children's Society should be supported by the district and county councils to help facilitate these vital networks, particularly for those who feel they have had to move into a house and have suffered a subsequent detachment from the wider travelling community.

**13.21.2** The Robert Barton Trust (RBT) provided a service to Travellers to access laundry facilities, food and hot drinks on some days, and some training courses, as well as general support and advice. The Trust had also recently negotiated with a vet to provide free advice and some treatment for animals, and a dentist to also provide some free treatment for Travellers. The Robert Barton Trust has now had to close due to lack of funding. Whilst Travellers are resourceful and self-sufficient, councils and health agencies should be mindful of the gap in support that may result from the closure of charities like RBT. In the current economic climate it is recognised that financial assistance will be difficult, but other support and resources may be appropriate to help support residents' groups on council sites and representative groups such as the Romany Gypsy Advisory Group South West. Reacting to poor health and other issues will be more expensive for the authorities in the long run, than it would be to provide some funds to shore up preventative support through charitable agencies.

## **13.22 Community Cohesion: Discrimination and Harassment**

**13.22.1** Councils, housing associations and Police should take steps to investigate cases of discrimination and harassment where they are reported. Agencies will each have their own policies for dealing with such incidents but there should be some consistency across the County area.

**13.22.2** There is an existing example of good practice in the county. The Community Justice Panel in South Somerset provides a restorative justice approach in response to referrals from partner agencies. Partner agencies who can refer include South Somerset District Council, Mendip, Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Police, Yarlington Homes, Victim Support and the Crown Prosecution Service. Councils who are not already partners in the Community Justice Panel should consider signing up so they can refer cases as appropriate.

**13.22.3** Instances of discrimination and bullying can have a long-term damaging effect. Whilst the support of individuals is important, it is vital that institutions have whole organisation approaches so there is a consistent method of providing support to Gypsies and Travellers and dealing with bullying.

**13.22.4** There are clear and unambiguous duties for statutory authorities to promote good race relations; this includes the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Councils, health, schools and police should review their policies, procedures, implementation, and training programmes for staff to ensure that cases of discrimination and bullying are dealt with efficiently.

**13.22.5** Where support systems work already, support (financial and otherwise) should be provided by councils to enable the expertise of organisations like the Children's Society to continue.

## **13.23 'Big Society' Incentives**

**13.23.1** The new coalition Government has announced that instead of targets it will provide incentives for local people to accept new housing (and site) development in their areas. Councils should actively engage with central Government on these ideas as they develop and potentially lever in finance (if this is an incentive considered by Government) to build new sites.

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### 13.24 Communications Strategy

**13.24.1** It is recommended that the district councils work together with the County to establish a communications strategy for disseminating the findings from this GTAA. Information on communications plans can be found in Richardson (2007) on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation website. Councils need to have a proactive strategy and should brief members on the basis for the GTAA, the cultural heritage of Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset, the business and the social case for future site provision.

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## Appendices

- A – Pitch requirement methodology
- B – Fire prevention/safety findings on sites
- C - Mendip Community Land Trust leaflet
- D – Topic Guides for the 3 focus groups
- E - Focus on Young People
- F – Focus on New Travellers
- G – Focus on Women and Health

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## **Appendix A**

### **Methodology and elements in the pitch requirement calculation**

This appendix provides an explanation of the elements in the calculation of residential pitch requirements 2010 – 15. The calculations are based on survey responses, Government data in the bi-annual caravan count, and information provided in snapshot data surveys at the beginning and the end of the research project. Clear explanations are given below on where information is based on survey responses, methodologically and commonly used assumptions, and calculations. The table at 6.1 shows the total estimated Gypsy and Traveller population in Somerset and pitch requirement calculations are grossed up to represent the numbers in this table, rather than just showing the requirements of the 157 families who took part in the survey.

The remainder of this appendix focuses on the table at 6.2 (and then those tables which subsequently display the pitch requirement data by district). It should be noted that table 6.2 shows rows 1-17, but in the district tables there are additional rows 18 (additional estimated requirement to 2020) and 19 (total pitches required 2010-2020 for each district)

Row 1: The number of social rented residential pitches at the local authority sites as reported in the CLG data on LA and RSL Gypsy sites, January 2010. Note that this does not include the Middlezoy Transit site in Sedgemoor District because Transit pitches are included in a separate calculation and the Middlezoy pitches are included in transit capacity in table 6.10 as part of that separate calculation.

Row 2: The estimated number of residential pitches on private authorised sites. This is an estimate from the CLG Caravan Count January 2010 which reports the number of caravans not pitches. This element of the calculation divides the number of caravans into pitches by using a factor of 1.6. The figure of 1.6 has been used by Pat Niner most recently in evaluations of GTAAs, and her report on the progress made by councils in meeting need.

Row 3: Sum of Rows 1 and 2

Row 4: The Study Team has assumed that current overcrowding relating to submerged households will have been identified in row 9 which gives numbers for new household formation anticipated in 2010-20. This assumption is in common with other GTAA methodologies and it avoids 'double counting'.

Row 5: This is a net figure requiring an estimate of the flows from sites to house and houses to sites in 2010-15.

### Box 1 Sites to houses

**Survey:** 6% of respondents on sites were seeking a move, of which 20% preferred to live in a house, all of which were sought in the Study area (Somerset)

**Study Team Assumption:** That this number is unrealistically low at less than 1% of all those on sites. In practice a larger proportion can be expected to do so as a result of infirmity and a desire to access health or education facilities. There may also be pitches that become available due to death with an existing submerged household or a newly forming household taking up that accommodation. We have assumed that 5% of those on sites will cease to require accommodation on a site due to movement to a house, or death; this is a commonly used assumption for GTAA studies.

**Calculation:** 5% of a population of 308 families on sites = 15

*Population used in this calculation is families on authorised sites 228, unauthorised sites 50 and encampments 30.*

### Box 2 Houses to sites

**Survey:** 76% of survey respondents in houses expressed a preference to move; of which 63% preferred to live on a site, all of which were sought in the Study Area.

**Study Team Assumption:** That the proportion having an interest in actually doing so would be lower, as this would only materialise where site provision is sufficiently attractive. There needs to be a judgement made to distinguish aspiration to live on a site, and a need to be on site accommodation which will manifest where appropriate accommodation is offered to the travelling communities. We assume that 30% of Gypsies and Travellers in housing actually need site accommodation rather than the figure of 76% who show an aspiration to live on site but who may not move even where appropriate provision is available. This % assumption is in common with other GTAA studies.

**Calculation:** 76% of an estimated housed population of 189 families in the Study Area seeking a move = 144; of which 63% prefer a site = 91; 100% of which is sought in the Study Area = 91; 30% being the proportion where this need would arise in practice = 27

The net figure in Row 5 is 27 minus 15<sup>46</sup> = a net requirement for 12 pitches

**Row 6:** The estimated number of residential pitches on unauthorised sites. This is an estimate from the CLG Caravan Count January 2010 which reports the number of caravans not pitches. This element of the calculation divides the number of caravans into pitches by using a factor of 1.6. It is assumed that all those families residing on unauthorised sites are in need of accommodation (this is a common assumption across GTAA studies). This need can be met if local authorities tolerate or regularise these developments.

**Row 7:** This factor takes into account families involved in unauthorised encampment in need a permanent residential pitch in the Study Area and estimates that this is 15 families (consisting of 8 pitches shown in the first paragraph of Box 3 and 7 pitches indicated in the last paragraph of Box 3)

<sup>46</sup> This figure of 15 is the calculation of people on sites who will vacate their site either through a move to housing, or death in a family; so notionally 15 pitches on sites will become available from those moving off sites, which can then be used by those in housing saying they need to live on a site.

### **Box 3 Families involved in unauthorised encampments**

**Secondary data:** This part of the calculation relates to a single tolerated encampment in Pilton, Mendip established since 1999 consisting of 12 vans  
**Study Team Assumption:** That these caravans are equivalent to households if divided by 1.6 and that the whole of this encampment contributes directly to the need for pitches This assumption of 1.6 caravans per pitch has been used in other GTAA studies (a figure of 1.7 has also previously been used in GTAA's, but this assumption has been revised in recent years)  
**Calculation:** 12 divided by 1.6 = 8 pitches

**Secondary data:** This part of the calculation relates to all other encampments in the Study Area. CLG data for the last five counts (January 2008 – January 2010) when added together provides a cumulative count of 422 'caravan nights' of which 120 relate to the Mendip DC encampment referred to above. If deducted the balance of caravan nights across the Study Area is 302 which divided over 10 Counts is an average of 30  
**Study Team Assumption:** That the number of caravans can be divided by 1.6 to provide an equivalent number of households/families. This is a common methodological assumption used in other GTAA's.  
**Calculation:** 30 caravans divided by 1.6 = 19 families

This following part of the calculation estimates the extent of repeat encampments by the same families.

**Study Team Assumption:** That each family would be involved in two repeat encampments in the Study Area in 2010 – 15 giving a lower number of separate families involved. This assumption is made based on examination of details of encampments where provided and it is a common methodological assumption with other GTAA studies. An assumption of repeat encampments is needed here to avoid 'double counting' e.g. seeing each separate encampment as a separate family in need of accommodation.  
**Calculation:** 19 divided by 2 = 9

This part of the calculation estimates the number of families with a residential pitch requirements in the Study Area  
**Survey:** The proportion of those on encampments looking for a permanent site is 20%  
**Calculation:** 9 separate households by 20% = 2  
**Survey:** The proportion of those looking for a permanent site seeking one in the Study Area is 38%  
**Calculation:** 2 multiplied by 38% = 0.7 per Count/six months. Multiplied by 10 over a 5-year period = 7

**Row 8:** The estimated number of residential pitches on site with temporary planning permission. This is an estimate from the CLG Caravan Count January 2010 which reports the number of caravans not pitches. This element of the calculation divides the number of caravans into pitches by using a factor of 1.6. Renewal of these permissions or permanent permission would count towards additional provision.

**Row 9:** This requires estimates of the numbers of new households expected to form in the next five years and the proportion of these will need a pitch. These calculations are made separately to reflect demographic differences between those in different types of accommodation.

#### **Box 4 New households forming on sites**

**Secondary Data:** The estimated number of residential pitches on private authorised sites is 228. This is an estimate from the CLG Caravan Count January 2010 which reports the number of caravans not pitches. This element of the calculation divides the number of caravans into pitches by using a factor of 1.6.

**Survey:** The percent of households seeking their own accommodation in the next 5 years as a proportion of those on sites was 56% of respondents on sites  
**Calculation:** =  $228^{47}$  multiplied by 56% = 127

**Study Team Assumption:** That treating all individuals as requiring independent accommodation will over state need as there will be some inter-marriage of individuals and some over-claiming. We have assumed on the basis of what is likely that the requirements of 40% of individuals are likely to require their own accommodation. This is a methodological assumption held in common with other GTAA studies and again deals with the issue of 'double counting'.

**Calculation:** 127 multiplied by 40% = 51 new forming households

#### **Box 5 Pitch requirements from newly formed households on sites**

**Survey:** 98% of families on sites expressed a preference for sites and of those 98% expressed a wish to remain in the area

**Calculation:** Base is 51 new forming households (as above) multiplied 98%  
multiplied 98% = 49 pitches

#### **Box 6 New households forming in housing**

**Survey:** There were individuals requiring their own accommodation in the next 5 years in equivalent to 56% of respondents in houses.

**Calculation:**  $189^{48}$  multiplied by 56% = 106

**Study Team Assumptions:** That treating all individuals as requiring independent accommodation will over state need as there will be some inter-marriage of individuals and some over-claiming. We have assumed on the basis of what is likely that the requirements of 40% of individuals are likely to require their own accommodation. We have grossed this to the estimate of 106 housed Gypsy and Traveller households who will require their own accommodation.

**Calculation:** 40% of 106 = 42 families

#### **Box 7 Pitch requirements from newly formed in housing**

**Survey:** 56% of families in houses expressed a preference for sites

**Calculation:** 56% of 42 families = 24

**Survey:** 98% of those in housing expressing a preference for a site said that they wanted that to be in the study area

<sup>47</sup> Total estimated population of Gypsy-Travellers living on authorised sites, as shown in table 6.1

<sup>48</sup> Total housed Gypsy-Traveller population as shown in table 6.1

**Study Team Assumption:** That only 85% would remain in the area as some also expressed an interest in other areas

**Calculation:** Base is 24 new forming households (as above) multiplied 85% = 20 pitches

**Row 9** Total = sum of new pitches required for newly forming households from sites and houses = 49 + 20 = 69 pitches

**Row 10:** Sum of rows 4 – 9

**Row 11:** There are reported to be three vacant pitches at the Otterford local authority site in Taunton Deane at the time of undertaking this calculation (July 2010)

**Row 12:** It is assumed that there are no pitches on authorised private sites that are undeveloped as at July 2010.

**Row 13:** There are not known to be any pending planning applications as at July 2010. Were there to be any, no allowance would be made in this calculation since their outcome would be unknown.

**Row 14:** there are three unoccupied pitches at a site at Pitney Hill, South Somerset which have been acquired by the local authority and are not included in the July 2010 Caravan Count

**Row 15:** The number of vacancies that will arise on social rented sites

**Box 8 Vacancies on social rented sites**

**Secondary Data:** There are 84 pitches on social rented sites as at July 2010 Caravan Count

**Study Team Assumption:** That there is a vacancy rate of 5% per annum throughout the period 2010 – 2015; this is an assumption held in common with other GTAA studies

**Calculation:** 84 multiplied by 5% multiplied by 5<sup>49</sup> = 21

**Row 16:** Sum of rows 11 – 15

**Row 17:** Resultant pitch requirement for 2010-15 produced from taking the sum of row 16 (additional supply) from the sum of row 10 (additional need).

**Row 18:** Projection of household growth in 2015- 20 as set out in section 6 of this report. Row 18 applies only to the district tables 6.4 – 6.8

**Row 19:** Sum of rows 17 + 18 Row 19 applies only to the district tables 6.4 – 6.8

<sup>49</sup> 5 years in the period 2010-2015

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This explanation is illustrated with the figures relating to the overall calculation for Somerset County Council. The same steps apply to the methodology applied in respect of each district where survey findings have been applied they have been grossed up to the overall county level and then distributed pro rata to each district within the calculation.

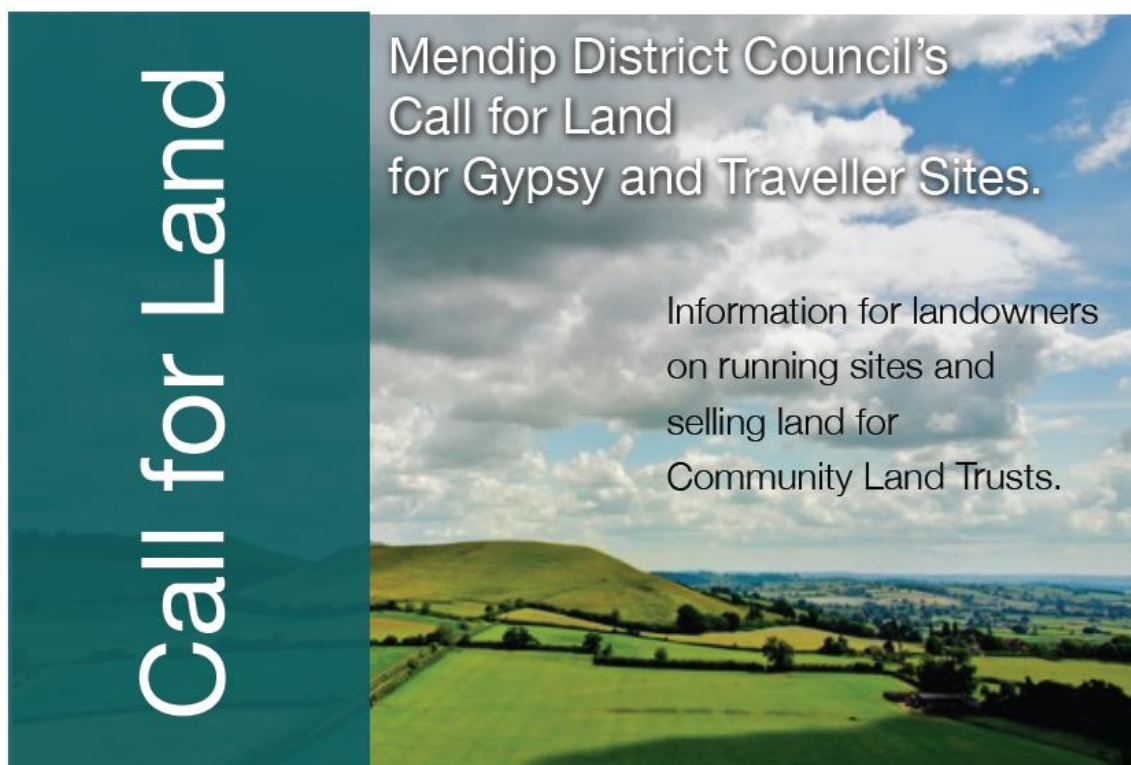




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## APPENDIX C

### MENDIP COMMUNITY LAND TRUST SCHEME



**Do you own land? Do you wish to gain extra income from it?**  
**Would you be interested in selling small plots for alternative uses?**

Mendip District Council are looking for landowners interested in Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Mendip has been an important area for Gypsies and Travellers for many hundreds of years and continues to be so today. Within the area there is an ongoing need for sites so that Gypsies and Travellers have a place for permanent residence or for temporary use whilst travelling.

Mendip District Council is seeking to increase the number

of sites across the district to meet the housing needs of this community. We are particularly keen to promote small, privately run sites which are either owned by the residents as part of our Community Land Trust scheme or are owned and managed by landowners providing pitches to rent.

This leaflet provides a short introduction to the running of Gypsy and Traveller sites as a rural business and an overview of our Community Land Trust scheme which requires plots of

land to buy. If you are interested in either running a site as a rural business or in making your land available for purchase, please contact the Housing and Regeneration Department for further information.

#### **In this guide:**

Running Sites  
Costs & Income  
Community Land Trusts  
Learning More

[www.mendip.gov.uk](http://www.mendip.gov.uk)  
Customer Services: 01749 648 999

**MENDIP**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Running A Private Gypsy or Traveller Site.

### Running Sites as a Rural Business.

For many landowners it can be difficult to ensure a sufficient income from traditional agricultural uses of land. As a result, many have diversified the uses to which their land is put and such enterprises now form an important component of the rural economy. Running small private sites for Gypsies or Travellers can create a sustainable rural business income for landowners looking to increase the diversity of their land use.

### What is a Gypsy or Traveller Site?

#### Residential Sites.

There are 2 types of sites: residential and transit. A residential site is where people live as their main home year-round. Each family group will have their own pitch with space for caravans and vehicles and there will be a shared amenity block as well. Residential sites are normally for use by either Gypsies or Travellers rather than a mixture.

#### Transit Sites.

Transit sites will often be of a similar design to residential sites in terms of amenities and pitch requirements but are meant for temporary use only. Often a manager will live on site or must be available to raise barriers to let larger caravans and vehicles on and off the site. The length of stay can vary. An example might be 6 weeks at any one time with a maximum of 3 months in any year but this is up to the site manager.

#### Costs and Income.

Different site designs will have different costs involved. The most expensive will be a design incorporating a permanent utility building and hard standing pitches with all the facilities for power, water and sewerage connected up. The least expensive will be a site with a low impact style design, using compost toilets, renewable energy and possibly other water sources and recycling systems.

The rental income will vary but current Local Authority site rents are around £60 a week per pitch. An average site might have between 6 - 12 pitches. So it would not be unreasonable for a small site to generate over £1000 per month but this could rise to almost £3000 on a larger site.

### What are Gypsy and Traveller sites like?

There is no set 'design' for sites but the government says that any site, whether for Gypsies or New Travellers, should be:

- Sustainable, safe and easy to manage and maintain,
- Of a decent standard, equitable to that which would be expected for social housing in the settled community, and
- Should support harmonious relations between Gypsies and Travellers and the settled community.

Guidelines can be found in two government handbooks:

Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites, downloadable from <http://bit.ly/9LU5ik> and

Gypsy and Traveller Site Management, downloadable from <http://bit.ly/9Yzx8a>.



## Selling land for a Community Land Trust Site.

If you do not wish to be involved in creating, running and managing a site but you do have underused land which may be suitable for this use then selling the land could be an option.

We are currently running a scheme to help Gypsies and Travellers set up their own small, private sites using repayable loans from the Council. These sites will be set up as Community Land Trusts which means they cannot be sold on for personal profit but generally remain for their purpose, even if the residents change over time. We are looking for landowners with suitable small plots of land who are willing to sell to groups of Gypsies or Travellers who wish to set up sites as Community Land Trusts under our site creation scheme.

We offer a number of incentives for landowners offering their land to us for use under this scheme. When a purchase price has been

agreed, a 10% deposit is paid upfront, rather than on completion as is normally the case. You get to keep the interest on this, even if the sale does not go through for certain reasons. It may also be possible to cover some or all of your conveyancing costs. We also offer a ready made agreement for both you as a landowner and the group wishing to buy your land, to use for free. This covers all the conditions of the sale.

Any land you offer must first pass a free pre-planning assessment and will then be made available for groups looking for land to come and view, in consultation with yourself. We operate as an introductory service only and you are free to enter into an agreement to sell with whoever you wish to or even no one at all. There is no commitment.

Upon signing an agreement with a group, standard land surveys will be carried out and the group will submit a planning application. When this has been approved, the remaining purchase price will be paid.

### What are Community Land Trusts?

Community Land Trusts are a legal entity established by the Government in 2004 and are a way for groups to hold assets for the benefit of the community, on a not for profit basis.

For more information on Community Land Trusts we have a leaflet called "Mendip CLT Scheme for Gypsies and Travellers". This is available from the Council Offices or is downloadable from: <http://tiny.cc/pqht6>.

For a national overview, see the website <http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk>

✓ **Supporting**  
the local economy

✓ **Improving**  
the quality of life

✓ **Enhancing**  
the place to live



# Learning More

## Suitability of Land.

For more information on whether your land might be suitable for a site, please see the leaflet called "Mendip Site Guidance for Gypsies and Travellers". This is available from the Council Offices or is downloadable from <http://tiny.cc/pqht6>.

## Business Help.

If you are interested in running a rural business, the following websites cover useful information:

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

[www.connectingsomerset.co.uk](http://www.connectingsomerset.co.uk)

[www.ruralenterprisesolutions.co.uk](http://www.ruralenterprisesolutions.co.uk)

## Gypsy & Traveller Strategy.

Mendip District Council has published its Gypsy and Traveller Strategy which provides a useful background to why we are working with Gypsies and Travellers in this area and the history of both of these groups. You can see all of our planned actions in this document which is available for download from Mendip District Council Gypsy and Traveller Project Web page at: <http://tiny.cc/nof5i>.

**If you would like to have an informal talk about this scheme, contact Mendip District Council and ask to speak to Lynden Swift on:**

**01749 648 999**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **TOPIC GUIDES FOR THE THREE FOCUS GROUPS**

#### **Topic guide for young people's focus group**

##### **1. Accommodation**

- i) Where do you live now?
- ii) What do you like best about where you live now?
- iii) Are there things you don't like about where you live now?

##### **2. Evictions**

- i) Have you ever been evicted from a site or the roadside?
- ii) Did this cause you difficulties?
- iii) How did it make you feel?

##### **3. Travelling**

- i) Do you ever go travelling?
- ii) What do you like about travelling?
- iii) Are there things you don't like about travelling?

##### **4. Education**

- i) Do you go to school?
- ii) If not, how do you learn?
- iii) What do you like best about your school?
- iv) Are there things you don't like about your school?

##### **5. Discrimination and bullying**

- i) Have you ever been bullied or discriminated against because you are a Traveller or a Gypsy?
- ii) Where did this happen?
- iii) Did anyone help you deal with it?

##### **6. Friendships**

- i) What is most important to you about your friendships?
- ii) Do you have friends who are non-Travellers / Gypsies?
- iii) Is there anything that makes it difficult to be friends with non-Travellers / Gypsies?

##### **7. Leisure activities**

- i) What do you enjoy doing in your own time?
- ii) Are there other activities you would like to be involved in?
- iii) Is there anything that makes it difficult to be involved in these activities?

##### **8. Hopes for the future**

- i) What would you like to do in the future?
- ii) Where would you like to be living?
- iii) What might make these things difficult?

iv) What might help you to do what you want, for example training, education, support, resources, advice?

### **9. Other issues**

i) Are there any other things that you would like the councils to know about the lives of young Gypsies and Travellers?

## **Topic guide for New Travellers' focus group**

Introduction – confidentiality, gender, duration of travelling

What type of accommodation are you currently living in? And type of tenure if on site.

What would your ideal living situation be e.g. housing, bungalow etc. If sites, what type of site would you ideally like to live on?

Should there be sites for new Travellers only, or 'mixed' sites sharing with traditional (Gypsy and Irish) Travellers?

Have you any ideas for alternative models of site delivery, i.e. other than 'standard' local authority Gypsy sites? – Probe if necessary CLT

Would these sites/pitches be delivered privately, e.g. by new Travellers themselves, or by local authorities? What is a fair level of rent to charge? Should people be able to leave their pitches and go travelling without loss of their plot? (if so, for how long). Should visitors be able to stay at residential sites?

What do you see as the differences between residential and transit sites for New Travellers?

Would you be interested in sharing responsibility in the management of a network of transit sites?

Who would own these transit sites? Who would manage them?

How do you envisage the different types of site (permanent/residential and transit) working? (e.g. allocation, access, expenses) What type of facilities, (if any) would be required

Have you any health issues/conditions that you feel may have been developed been generated by living on sites (authorised or unauthorised)?

Has living on sites (authorised or unauthorised) impacted on your education or employment in any way? Positive/Negative?

Have you lived in housing at all recently? What were your experiences such accommodation – e.g. positive/negative?



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## Topic guide for women and health focus group

Introduction, Confidentiality, etc.

- Type of Accommodation and perceived impacts on health – physical, mental (self and family members)
- Ease of Access to health care (self/own family and others) – current location and when travelling
- How helpful are existing services – examples of good practice, discrimination, etc.
- Environmental issues and health (travelling + existing sites)
- Men's health – prevalence of conditions; supporting men to access services – cultural barriers, etc.
- Women's health - awareness of services, conditions etc
- Cultural Awareness of Gypsy/Traveller issues (health care providers)
- Attitudes towards health outreach work (community health advocates)
- Relationships with neighbours – well-being
- Experiences of living in housing
- Bereavement – services and support available
- Other

## **APPENDIX E**

### **FOCUS ON: YOUNG PEOPLE**

#### **Background**

The Young Persons focus group was facilitated by Sarah Cemlyn with extensive involvement from the Children's Society Children's Participation Project, and took place in a community venue in Taunton. The session built on the work of the Children's Society over many years with Gypsy and Traveller young people, including work to support their participation.

A questionnaire / topic guide had been prepared in advance in consultation with the Children's Society. This is reproduced at the end of this report. The Children's Society also worked with the young people and their families in advance of the session, to provide information about what would be involved and seek their consent to participate.

In the session the young people were offered a variety of ways of expressing their experiences and views, including interviewing each other in small groups, being interviewed by a member of the Children's Society staff or the research team, recording their experiences and views in writing on prepared questionnaires, using post-it notes on a flip chart, and / or preparing a collage (see attached). All of these media were used, but all young people also participated in small group interviews. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcribed interviews form the primary data source for this report, alongside the other sources.

The write up seeks to record the range of the young people's views and experiences in relation to the different topics in the topic guide. Two other themes also emerged from the data as significant, namely self-definition and Children's Society support, and these are discussed in the later sections of this report.

#### **Young people participating in the session**

There were six young 'New' Traveller women, aged 13, 14, 16, 18, 19 and 20. The twenty year old has a two year old son.

There were two young 'New' Traveller men, aged 16 and 17.

And there was a family of four Romany Gypsy siblings, aged between 10 and 13.

#### **Topics discussed**

A range of topics was discussed which went beyond accommodation, and took in subjects including education

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## Accommodation

The young people were asked where they live, what they liked best about it, and what they did not like.

Their current and previous experiences of accommodation were very varied and included:

Two young people living on single family sites with planning permission, described as 'in a caravan in my dad's field' and 'in the woods'

One living in a bender on a long term bender site with planning permission, the bender being described as 'pretty posh' and 'one of the new ones and it's on stilts'

One living on a rented pitch on a permanent private site for many years

Another currently living on this authorised site having previously lived on many unauthorised sites

One currently squatting having also previously lived on unauthorised sites

A family of siblings living on an unauthorised site on council land, having previously lived in a house for six years

One young person living in a house

And one living in a flat with her young child

They had all lived in previous places, some had travelled including in Europe, while several had experienced evictions.

### *Sites: Positives*

There was a diversity of perceptions and views among the group about living on sites, reflecting varied experiences. Three young New Travellers, whose parents had planning permission for a single family or bender site, expressed many positive views of their accommodation. These positives included: 'I like having a bit of space', 'like the freedom', the possibility of both 'being by yourself' without 'always people coming and going', and getting to know other people who also live on the site much better than you could get to know people in houses. Being close to nature was also important for those on self-provided sites.

I think I'm a lot the same really, like the freedom. I also, you know, like where you're so much closer to everything around you, it's like you're much more aware of the ground around you, that's what I really like.

Q: What do you like best about where you live?

A: It's in the woods.

Similar perspectives were echoed by a young New Traveller who had now moved into a house, but preferred living on a site, where there were friends nearby.

There's just more freedom. There's not so much noise from the city and shit..... It's more communal, you know everyone there.

Some positive comments from another participant were more narrowly focused on physical facilities.

A: I like the fact that it's got toilets and that it's got electric and that's about it really.

Slightly younger Romany Gypsy children, who had moved from a house where they had very difficult experiences back onto an unauthorised site, also shared positive views about being on this site concerning space, freedom to express themselves and engage in simple, enjoyable activities, and not being 'stuck' inside a house.

It's like bigger for us and we get to like go for walks and all that. I don't know, it's like you can do anything you want, you don't have to be like stuck in doors all day.

I like, again there's things all around us, I like taking my dogs for a walk.

When asked later about travelling, similar points were made reinforcing the positives for them of living on their current unauthorised site.

A: It's like where we're living now, it's like a holiday to us.

Q: So you stay there and you don't go off anywhere?

A: And we go swimming.

Other studies have pointed to the potential and importance of culturally relevant play on open sites that may not be available either in housing or on purpose built sites (Cemlyn 2000).

In comparison to some of the young New Travellers, the young Gypsies expressed their preference for a single family site, away from other people. This family were slightly younger than most of the New Traveller young people, who could find isolation and remoteness difficult for socialising as discussed below, so age could be one factor. However cultural preferences for small family sites among Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers have also been found in other studies (e.g. Greenfields et al 2007).

A: No one else lives there, we don't want it like all crowded, like other people live near us. We just want our own like land.

Q: So are there other people there now on the site?

A: No, just us....

A: All there is around us is one farmer, one farm.

Q: But you'd like to live just with your family on a site?

A: Yes, just our family

### *Sites: Negatives*

The young people also talked about the disadvantages of living on different kinds of sites. A conversation between three young New Travellers on fairly isolated family or group sites with planning permission referred to the sites being remote, far from towns, sometimes several miles from a bus stop, and not having their own transport. One person spoke of not having any friends around them on the site and so feeling lonely. A later section reports on their views on friendships generally.

I find that where I am it's really remote and like because it's just my family there as well, there's no friends.... Yes, it is really lonely, although it's nice and everything with your family, no one my own age around.

One of her companions agreed, pointing out that when you are younger you can amuse yourself in the countryside, but it is very difficult for teenagers to socialise, and public transport is inaccessible.

Yes and I mean when you're younger, you've got your own little made up world in the woods and all that, you just imagine stuff and that, but you get to a certain age and you want to go out and socialise more and then it's just really difficult to get out and it's annoying. You miss out on a few opportunities.... if we had a bus stop nearby, not one that's just like a Gypsy and Traveller stop but just like one nearby would be so much handier.

One New Traveller young person elaborated on the difficulties of trying to go out to socialise from an isolated muddy site, while another on a much larger site discussed similar difficulties within the site.

I always end up covered in mud when I go out because we're like living on a field, you know, if you fall over before you go to town or something, it's just really annoying.

Yes, it's really hard to walk around and it's really muddy...It's a massive site and hardly anyone lives near, they're all spread out.

One young person also highlighted how social isolation resulted for those still living on sites when other people moved off because of the constant evictions and difficulties accessing services that they experienced.

Q: Are there things that you don't like about where you live?

A: Yes, the fact that there's no one there because everyone's just moved off site.

Q: Why have they moved off site?

A: Because everyone's getting annoyed of moving around and it's really hard for their kids going to school and everything.

Two New Traveller young people, who had moved respectively into a house and onto an authorised private site, looked back on the days of living on sites, which they had clearly enjoyed in the past, but considered they were not so sociable and enjoyable any more. They also attributed this to many people having succumbed to the pressure of being moved on all the time and having moved into houses.

A. Sites now are just boring aren't they? They're not as funny as they used to be....

A: No, there are actually people moving into houses.....There's just not many sites, then everyone's just like been driven into moving into houses. So most of them live in houses now or they live in separate places.....They're just having to because they just can't deal with getting moved on all the time.

Another young person who had moved onto the same site from living on unauthorised sites did not yet have friends there, so commended the access to facilities, but otherwise did not like living there.

Q: Are there things you don't like about where you live now?

A: Yes, it's really far away from the bus stop and that there's just not many people I really like living there, like my friends and that.

The theme of isolation and loss of networks, that can be found in some of these extracts, to some extent reflects research by Smith (2004) about the problems that young New Travellers in isolated situations could experience. However this theme must also be put in context of the strong positive experiences related to friendships that some of the young people expressed, as discussed below in section 3.vi.

In terms of physical disadvantages, the younger Gypsy family referred to having no gas, electricity or water on their site, having to carry all their water and go to relatives for personal washing.

Q: You have to go and get your water?

A: It weighs a ton and we've got this water butt that weighs a ton.....

Q: Is there anything else you haven't got?

A: We don't have showers, so we have to go to our gran's to have baths and showers.

The impact of reduced amenities on some self-provided sites is to a considerable extent dependent on the season and also the weather, being greatly exacerbated in the winter months. As a young person on one of these sites commented concerning the difference between summer and winter:

Yes, always waiting for the summer

The snow and cold temperatures experienced in early 2010 had a considerable impact in relation to keeping warm, and also health, as discussed by three New Traveller young people.

A weekend, I always try and get out, just to get out of town, more Sunday... because you've got to find, like we do have water but it's freezing at the moment, so try and find somewhere to go and have a nice good long bath.

When it snowed that time, it was like, god, really, really thick snow and I was ill as well and it was horrible because it's cold outside and it's cold inside and it's like colder inside than it is outside, yes it wasn't nice.

The winter darkness also has an impact on activities because of limited electricity supplies with lack of sunlight to charge solar generators. In this context, days off school because of snow, after the first stage of enjoying the experience, could be especially limiting.

...like it starts OK because you have days off school with the snow, so we had all day, in the winter it gets dark so early, you just kind of find yourself sitting in front of half light because you can't use too much power and things like that. That's one of the biggest things is how much light and sound you can have because power and it gets dark so early, there's no solar charging.

#### *Houses: Positives*

One young New Traveller was currently living in a house, having moved there from a private site, and one or two others had experience of living in housing. Some positives were expressed about housing by the person currently in a house and his friend, in terms of facilities and fewer daily living tasks.

Q: So are there things that you do like about living in a house?

A: Sort of you don't have to get up to chop wood.

Q: And you've lived in a house have you?

A: Yes, it's a lot easier in a house.

A: Whack the heating on.

#### *Houses: Negatives*

However these same facilities were also seen to lead on to disadvantages, compared to the healthier lifestyle on a site.

A: You can be well lazy in a house, it's not good, it's not healthy, all I do is sit in front of a computer and play station.

Not having friends around while living in a house was seen as a major drawback by this young person, who also commented on the noise and drunkenness from a nearby pub, and on neighbours who complained to Police about loud music being played. This was compared to living on a site, where if people did not like what someone was doing they would come and ask them about it directly. This was further evidence of the positives of communal and neighbourly relationships on sites, where potential disputes may be resolved through amicable negotiation.

Among the young Travellers on self-provided sites, one of whom had grown up in a house till the age of 9, there was some weighing up of the pros and cons of houses versus living on their sites:

Q: Do you think where you live is superior to living in a house? ....

A: In some ways it is.

A: There are also drawbacks..., actually yes it probably is.

This was followed by more adverse comments about the lighting in housing:

I don't like the electricity in houses, it makes me gets headaches and stuff.  
Yes, the lighting, it's horrible, it's all set.

Subsequently these young people compared the stable routines of living in a house to the pleasure of being close to the elements and experiencing their unpredictability in a bus or trailer.

A: ..I've stayed in houses before and I do quite like it but after a while it kind of, it feels like just a routine that you're going through. There's no excitement, get up, get breakfast, go outdoors.

A: The weather doesn't affect like how we get to sleep and things like that if you're in a house, everything is like strict and set where it is.

A: Yes, like you can't hear the rain or nothing. Like whether it's pouring down with rain, in my place you can hear it raining loudly on the roof and it's really

A: Tuck yourself in bed.

A: Yes and you're all warm and snuggled.

A: Yes, it makes you feel even warmer if it's raining outside and you hear it really heavy and then you're in bed and warm.

The young Gypsy family had experienced serious harassment and racist abuse while living in a house prior to moving out onto an unauthorised site. It was clear within the interview that this had a damaging emotional effect on the children.



The reason why we don't like living in a house is because of the neighbours. Last time they said to my little sister to fall off the trim and break her neck and there'd be one less Gypsy in the family.

...

They never did like Gypsies, the next door neighbours.

....

They accused us for stealing something and then they found it like two days later.

..In their house

Disagreement and hostility between the family and their neighbours had finally resulted in arguments and neighbour disputes that in turn led to the family being evicted. The children's account of the background to the arguments included further examples of racism within the difficult relationships with neighbours, of the vulnerability experienced by the children, and the resultant curtailment of their ability to feel safe and engage in outside play.

A: Yes and they were the ones that was causing the trouble, like calling us Gypo and all that. They accused her for stealing, we just told them who did it and then it started like tons of arguments.

Q: So you had arguments?

A: Yes because they just accused us for nothing.

A: And made us threats and all that.

A: Yes my sister nearly got ran over and they laughed.

.....

A: And they had a very vicious dog and every time I was in the garden, they put it in the garden so we couldn't play out there. So to scare us away, we couldn't even go in our garden, like freedom.

The children also conveyed the difficulties the family experienced in trying to engage assistance from the council or police in addressing these issues.

Q: Did anybody help you when these things were happening?

A: No, we tried, we told them, the council but they wouldn't do nothing.

A: One day we had a chicken called R.. and they pulled its neck. And one day the man let his dog out and it bit [one of the children] across there.

Q: So ..your parents tried to get help with what was happening ...?

A: Yes but they always, police always took their side of the story and my dad had a go at them and they said, cool down mate ...and that's how we got evicted. They were the ones who started it.

A: Because my dad was a Traveller, they said they're frightened my dad might hurt their car.

This background led to the family moving to an unauthorised site where the children felt happier (despite the insecure accommodation), with freedom to play outside, and in the safety of living with just their family.

## **Evictions**

The young people were asked whether they had been evicted from a site or the roadside, whether it caused them difficulties and how it made them feel.

While some of the young people had direct experience of eviction, others did not. However all knew of people who had been evicted, as part of their broader cultural knowledge. The young people who participated in the focus group were all currently in stable enough situations to be able to engage with activities such as the focus group. Young people currently experiencing serious insecurity and threatened or actual eviction would not be in a position either to be contacted or to engage with such an event, and therefore their perspectives could not be included in this study.

Among the New Traveller young people, a few referred to being multiple evictions: being evicted 'millions' of times, 'too many times', eviction from 'loads of sites and lay bys and everything', 'being evicted from the roadside several times'.

The difficulties arising from eviction included practical losses, having to change schools and therefore lose friendships, a detrimental impact on health, and feelings of exclusion and insecurity, as illustrated in the following exchanges.

Q: What difficulties did it cause you?

A: Losing stuff, change schools and stuff like that.

Q: How did it make you feel?

A: Depressed

-----

Q: Did this cause you difficulties?

A: Yes, loads because you're just never settled in the same school or anything like that and you have to move and then make new friends and get known around the place.

Q: How did it make you feel?

A: Horrible, just the way you're treated about like when we, if we hadn't moved in time we used to get like people threaten to take all our homes and that.

One young person gave an insight into how eviction from the roadside could involve unreasonable behaviour on the part of those evicting (expecting a family to move on in the middle of the night). This could become part of routine experience, causing disruption while also giving rise to adaptive strategies.

Q. Did this cause you difficulties?

A. Not really, just had to move to a different layby

Q. How did it make you feel?

A. A bit annoyed, because we were woken up at about 1am and told we couldn't sleep there

Speaking from their general cultural knowledge, two young Travellers currently living on a private site and in a house spoke of the difficulties they observed people experiencing, and the attitudes of different public bodies, especially councils.

A: I've seen the little sites being evicted and the legal business they've got to go through, it's quite difficult. The amount of different places you, it's like different procedures and stuff, you know, like move onto a site in a wood, if it's the council's wood then they get pretty serious about it.

Q: Is it ..because they're worried about fire or..?

A: No I doubt it.

A: Dog walkers complaining.

A: Yes, I don't know, the forestry commission just don't like it but it's harder to go against the council..

They were also well versed in the further barriers that were erected once families were evicted from land.

A: Normally once you get evicted you get banned from the area or the county or something by the council...

A: With the council, once someone's been evicted off the land, they put a notice up so no one else can move there ever again basically, that's what happens. If you do move there you get..

A: They put like big concrete boulders in the way so you can't move on, so it makes it difficult.

Three young New Travellers whose families lived on self-provided sites with planning permission had either not experienced eviction personally, or not for some years. One remembered being moved on when much younger, and another recalled Police or residents frequently moving them on when they travelled in Spain. The young person currently living in a house also referred to his mother having experienced evictions. A key factor was that their parents had experienced multiple evictions and this led them to seek stability, in some cases through settling on sites where they could gain planning permission.

This is illustrated in this exchange by a Children's Society interviewer, who had worked with the young people over some time.

A: The reason we got planning permission is because someone tried to give us an eviction notice, so we had twelve days to move out or apply to planning.....

Q: I think with you guys, your parents have almost chosen to find you places where you're unlikely to get evicted because of their bad experiences.

As outlined above, the Gypsy family were evicted from the house where they were living following experiences of harassment and racism, leading to disputes with neighbours. This had been a traumatic experience.

## **Travelling**

The young people were asked if they go travelling, what they liked about travelling, and what they did not like about it.

Experiences of travelling varied, with some having still having contemporary experiences and others looking back to the past.

One young person now living in a house had travelled widely when younger, and briefly summed up both the positives and the negatives.

Q. You're in a house now but do you go travelling sometimes?

A: Well not any more, we used to travel around England, around Spain, around France all the time, never stopped.

Q: Did you like that?

A: Yes but it was just hard to keep hold of all your friends and stuff, so it's hard to make friends... Just had to move all the time.

One young person conveyed strong positive memories of travelling as a very young child, and the gap it left in her life now that her family no longer travelled.

Q: Do you ever go travelling?

A: Not any more, probably the last time we probably did it, thinking back to my dad's when it was a wagon but that was probably just before I started school. I do miss it though, I can still, even though it was ages ago, I can still remember that amazing feeling and there was like probably about twelve of us, like now and again it changed but since then no, not properly. I do really miss that but I think it's a lot harder to park up now these days than before.

Further discussion between these young people picked up the themes of previous travel abroad as discussed by another participant above, and of memories of travelling. It also indicated that travelling might currently take the form of holidays, that travel to festivals is still an important feature, and that travelling is a strong aspiration, and the lack of it causes regret, as Parry et al (2004) found with Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers. It incidentally shed further light on the strong networks between New Travellers.

A: I go travelling a lot because my mum loves holidays. When I was younger I did use to go on holiday for two months with people called...

A: I know them really, really, really well, ...is like my best friend.

A: But I used to go and stay with them on their wagon and park up in places. Yes obviously I've travelled like lots of places, I've been to Spain, Morocco, Portugal, Tenerife, Ibiza, India.

Q: I'm so jealous, carry on.

A: The only travelling I ever do is like when we go to festivals, like we travel to and from festivals in our wagon but that's it. I mean I've been abroad a few times, just with my mum, it's just not the same. So no, I don't really ever go travelling.

Young people whose families still travelled spoke very positively of the benefits, as in these exchanges between young people interviewing each other. Their comments speak for themselves.

Q: What do you like about travelling?

A: You're just free to do whatever you want and can just, you don't have to worry about anything.

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Q: What do you like about travelling?

A: Going to new places, seeing different things.

-----

Q: Do you ever go travelling?

A: Yes, loads, I love it.

Q: What do you like about travelling?

A: Just going different places, seeing different things, meeting other people, just yes, going different places really.

There was also discussion of the difficulties and hardships of travelling, which often focused on the problems of finding places to stop.

Q: Are there things you don't like about travelling?

A: Yes, it just gets quite hard sometimes finding places to go and stuff like that.

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Q: Are there things you don't like about travelling?

A: Yes, not always being able to go where we want and not being allowed places on site.

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Q: Are there things you don't like about travelling?

A: Not really, apart from the fact that you get moved on quite quick when you go somewhere and the way people treat you as well, I don't like that.

In one of the exchanges already quoted above, a young person responded to a question about travelling with a comment on witnessing evictions, as an implicit reason for not travelling.

Q: Your family hasn't travelled?

A: I've seen the little sites being evicted and the legal business they've got to go through, it's quite difficult...

Sometimes the difficulties focused on the problematic attitudes of people they encountered while travelling

What do I not like about travelling, some people are like really disrespectful about it and they react really horribly because like, well I mean everyone is very stereotypical, not necessarily on purpose, just you always have an idea of someone when you first meet them. And a lot of the time people would have the wrong idea about Travellers and then they're just..

It was notable that in some instances discussion of travelling led spontaneously on to discussion of evictions or to discussion of harassment and violent incidents from members of the public.

Q: The next two questions are what do you like about travelling and what don't you like about travelling, is there anything you want to say about that?

A: Well have you got another question in there about like bad incidents and that?

One young person on a self-provided site, when asked what they did not like about travelling, proceeded to describe some serious incidents with stones being thrown and the contents of their truck being systematically smashed. Hostility to people on the basis of their travelling lifestyle has a long history and a very current reality (Bancroft 2005, McVeigh 1997, Richardson 2007). These reports will be presented in the section on discrimination and bullying below.

## **Education**

The young people were asked about whether they went to school, and what they liked best and did not like about their school or college.

The main themes in the responses covered firstly, attendance at school and stories about the challenges in accessing school as a Traveller, secondly views about the school as a whole and its ethos, thirdly likes and dislikes about particular subjects or teachers, and fourthly experiences related to being a Gypsy or a Traveller in school. As a strong strand concerns experiences of discrimination, discussion of which arose spontaneously within the topic of education, these will be brought together in the following section, 3.v. Research on the educational experiences of Gypsies and Travellers shows that bullying and discrimination are persistent experiences within schools (Cemlyn et al 2009, Lloyd and Stead 2001).

Almost all the young people currently attended either school or college, depending on their age. One of the older young people had temporarily left college but was planning to return, while the young mother, aged 20, was at a different life stage.

One or two young people had started school late, and one had received home schooling when away from school.

Q: ...So do you all go to school?

A: Yes, I didn't do when I was younger. I started in year 3 and did about two months of year three and I did two and a half days a week of school when I did it.

Q: And were you home schooled when you were out of school?

A: Yes, pretty much and every time I went away I was home schooled. I mean when I was in year seven though and I went away for like three and a half months..

In a comment on the importance of consistent support and feedback from the education system for children who are away travelling, this young person went on to describe how she was set work that was then ignored.

... they set me all this work and I didn't mind doing it because it was like a home school thing, but when I got back they didn't mark it or anything. And they just like, oh right, and then it just went basically in the bin. So basically I didn't understand what the point of doing it was and they're not even going to look at it.

One young New Traveller was invited by the interviewer, who had worked with her before, to explain the great lengths she had gone to as a younger child to get to school and back each day, when she moved from living with her father to living with her mother. Her determination in this story speaks for itself.

Q: Can you, I know that I've made you say this before but I'm just so impressed at the lengths you've gone to, to get to school and I think you should say it again for the council.

A: Well when I was in year seven I lived with my dad and school was like pretty much just down the road from me, the school bus stops at the corner and picks me up and that's like great. So that was at school, all through year seven, and then when I was in year eight I moved in with my mum and we lived the other side of a little place called ... and that was like getting up at half five in the morning, leave the house at like half six / quarter to seven, to get a bus at half seven to get to school for ten to nine. And then I couldn't get a bus home again until half four in the afternoon, which was back to ...at half five and then you get back home about sixish.

Q: So you've got a twelve hour day basically?

A: Basically, that was long days, I did that for nearly a year and then moved back in with my dad again.

Her commitment to education and the school she was attending led to her moving back with her father, which also leads into the second theme, about young people's views and experiences of a school and how different these can be from school to school, especially related to experiences of bullying.

There were loads of reasons for moving back in with my dad, one of them was that I was just like seriously tired and my school was just a brilliant school, I didn't want to leave it. So my school was great and I had friends as well, I didn't want to leave my friends in a way. I'd had big trouble in my first primary school and people bullying me just because I was my big brother's little sister and he wasn't very liked for whatever reasons and so because I was his little sister I was bullied. And then moving into this other school, I found friends and nice people and I thought, like if I'd found one school with nice people, I want to stay there really just because it's so nice to have nice people around.



Another young person had similar positive views of her current secondary school, which were also based on the absence of prejudice and bullying and accepting and friendly attitudes.

My school's great, it's always been really good, it's like one of the top schools, so I'm really, really lucky. I go to the ...School and everyone there, not everyone is nice and a lot of people I don't get on with but there's like, I've never had serious trouble, like you two tell me stuff from your schools, it's like, oh my god I'm so lucky because people are really genuinely really nice to me and friendly.

Two other young people discussed together their experience of college as reasonably positive, highlighting the differences from school.

Q: But you're enjoying them? [the subjects studied at A level]

A: Yes, I've made friends and stuff there, it's pretty good.

Q: So you like the college?

A: I prefer school, school was a lot funner wasn't it?

A: Yes.

A: But college is all right.

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Q: So people are more serious at college?

A: Yes, they treat you like an adult and you've got to act like older and you've got to like, I don't know, you can't

A: There's less lessons though.

A: Yes, there's less lessons, the lessons are easier I reckon, the work's easier because you want to do it. It's not like you're being told you have to do it.

A: And there's more free time.

A similar discussion might be expected among other groups of young people. Being Travellers was not seen as an issue, although it was also not an aspect of identity that was highlighted.

Q: Does it make any difference that you're from a Travelling background?

A: No, not really.

Q: Do people know that?

A: I don't know, at school they did and it wasn't really a problem but in college you don't just go up to people and go, oh I'm a Traveller.

Other young people had more negative experiences, which were predominantly related to being a Gypsy or Traveller, and will therefore be discussed below under the theme of Discrimination in section 3.v.

The third theme within the topic of education concerned likes and dislikes about particular subjects or teachers. This did not appear to be specific to their lives as Gypsies and Travellers, and therefore perhaps might have been replicated among other groups of young people. It is clearly of intrinsic interest for the young people themselves and those who support them directly in their education, but of less direct relevance for this report. However these discussions illustrated how most of the young people were engaged in education, and had clear views about what interested them, what helped them learn, what their strongest skills were and conversely the subjects in which they struggled more, as illustrated in the following two discussions, firstly between two New Traveller young people, and secondly within a Gypsy family group.

Q: What do you like best about your school, well college in your case?

A: Learning all the stuff.

Q: Learning hairdressing, right...

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Q: What do you like best about your school?

A: Learning new things.

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A: ..The only lessons that I'm not good at is history and geography.

Q: What about maths and writing?

A: I think I'm catching up with maths and in English, I've moved up a group in English.

A: But I had to swap groups for my English.

For some young New Travellers, experience of starting school late or having time out had a temporary impact on their studies and level of achievement, but one that they overcame. The commitment to school illustrated above, in the very long daily journey undertaken by a former primary school pupil, may have a bearing on how these young people were able to overcome the impact of absence from school.

I started school about a year late, which did set me back a lot. Up until year three I like, well actually I was like quite behind in a lot of classes, like in year two, at the end of year two, end of year three, but it's all right now because I'm in top sets and I've picked up.

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I was really, really like top sets in everything until I had my year out and then I went back to school and then I was kind of, not behind as such, but my spelling's not great, but other than that I'm now back up into top sets.

For another young person however, school was constraining and limiting, and she longed for a much wider range of experience to inform her learning. Such aspirations will be considered further in section 3.viii on hopes for the future.

A: The main thing I don't like about school is just, oh I hate the whole education system, stuck in a classroom, I can't stand it. I just want to get out and travel about, ...is so lucky going all about the country. I feel like, it's like, say you like had to vote for someone and they didn't tell you all the names, then you've got to vote, they just tell you and you've got to vote there and then, you can't wait to hear them all. It's like you're not getting the choice, you're not being able to experience first before you choose what you do and they're kind of just pacing out what they think is right for you. Yes, it does my head in, I want to escape.

Q: Do you think there's a different way of learning that you'd find much more helpful?

A: Yes definitely.

This argument for greater freedom of experience and work outside the classroom was elaborated in subsequent discussion. It also reflects the earlier conversation of these three young people about what they valued in their experiences of living in rural sites.

Q: Is there anything your schools could do to make your experience being at school better?

A: More doing stuff, not just all, questions from textbooks, more trips out, just more like outside time. Maybe like, it would be great, even if it was a summer classroom, you could be in at least just once every two weeks just to like, you know

A: Yes, it's like our school has a really big playing field and it would be really nice if you could like maybe a year group at a time in the summer just have one lesson a day out there or something, like find a way of being outside in the sun doing something for one lesson a day, rather than sat at the textbooks getting a headache from the sun through the windows.

A: Blinds down sometimes even, just lights on, just getting hot and stuffy. And we're not allowed to have drinks of water anymore in case we spill them, which kind of sucks. So you're just getting frustrated in lessons.

The fourth theme concerns experiences of being known as a Gypsy or Traveller in school, and these experiences varied. One common strand in the responses is that it generally seemed to be a topic to which the young people did give thought, which might not always be the case with questions to young people generally about other aspects of identity. For some young people, as we have seen, being known as a Traveller could be a fairly neutral experience. Having the support of other Gypsy or Traveller children was identified as a factor in avoiding discrimination.

Q: So ..you said, when you were at school being a Traveller didn't make any difference, you didn't ever experience being discriminated against or bullied?

A: In our year we had loads of people from the same site in the same year, so it was all right but if you were like at school on your own, then maybe. You might feel a bit shy about it or whatever.

Q: But the other pupils were all fine?

A: Yes, pretty much.

Q: Did they ever visit you on site?

A: Yes, you'd get some mates come round and have parties and stuff. There was lots of parties.

However this theme also picks up a negative strand from above about views of the school as a whole. Unfortunately there were some strong experiences of bullying or prejudice, primarily arising from being a Gypsy or a Traveller. These will therefore be discussed in the next section.

### **Discrimination and bullying**

The young people were asked if they had even been bullied or discriminated against as a Traveller or a Gypsy, where it happened, and whether anyone helped them deal with it. There is a strong education strand to this topic as indicated above.

A small minority of the young people had generally escaped experiences of racism.

I never really have had any trouble but I know some people that have..

However when previously asked what they did not like about their school, bullying and racism was a recurrent theme for many, and therefore these two topics merged to a considerable extent (Lloyd and Stead 2001).

Q: Are there things you don't like about your school?

A: When I went, yes there was loads of stuff, just people's attitudes were just crap and even the teachers and everything, so yes I don't really like that attitude.

As reported in other studies, bullying and racism were not just experienced from other children but also from adults, including those in authority such as teachers, and members of the public. The young Gypsy family described abusive experiences from a shopkeeper and a school bus driver, clearly identifying different treatment from different individuals.

Q: Do you ever come across other people ...shopkeepers, Policemen, anybody else who doesn't treat you right?

A: A shopkeeper.

A: (Name of shopkeeper)

A: (Name of shopkeeper), we go in and

A: He tells us to F off and stuff.

.....

Q: Do you think that's anything to do with being Gypsies?

A: We've got this bus driver at school, he calls us gays and he calls (unfinished).

A: It's on the way back and he's a mean driver.

A: It's not (Name), he likes us, the bus driver who takes us to school in the morning.

While education settings were a frequent location for experiences of bullying, it could happen anywhere.

Q: Have you ever been bullied or discriminated against because you are a Traveller or a Gypsy?

A: Yes, loads of times.

Q: Where did this happen?

A: Mostly school and college but pretty much most public places.

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In school, like mainly in school I used to get bullied all the time. Loads, like in any public place you go, like if you've got mud on your shoes or you look a bit scruffy, you just get tarred with the same brush with everyone else.

Persistent experiences of discrimination and the resultant fear of prejudice and hostility could present significant barriers to use of services, as in the case of a young woman with a disabled child who could not use a local children's centre for these reasons.

Well I didn't really know anyone there and I just thought they would judge me for being a Traveller because I've been judged loads for being a Traveller, especially with trying to get a health visitor. I've had loads of trouble trying to sort that out.

Some experiences on site illustrated persistent harassment.

Q: What about outside of school? ....

A: God, they're so annoying, when we used to live in this truck, every time, because we lived by the road, you just hear the cars slow down to just stare at us and back off again up the hill. Seriously this is like nine out of ten cars did this and it just got so annoying.

There were also more violent experiences of vigilante action and violence, which have also been reported in numerous other studies (Cemlyn et al 2009). It seemed appropriate to report the following account of such incidents in full.

Q: Do you want to talk about things that have happened?

A: There was, yes there's been quite, because we live by the side of the road, it's just a lane, not that busy, but when we used to live in a truck at the end of a road, now we're further down the road but it's quite obvious. We've had quite a few incidences, like when I was little, I'd just be outside, I've had people like chuck stones out of the car at me, this was when I was just like, you know, really young, three or four.

Q: Stones at you?

A: Yes and I was by myself, just three or four, and it happened again when I was probably about six. I remember one time there was a load of like, a gang of guys in this car and two were like leaning out the front, the window roof, the sun roof and out the windows and they just basically stopped and just threw a load at me and then just zoomed off. And we've had stuff stolen sometimes, like from the porch, car tyres done in and we've had like our, in the truck, the whole place got smashed up with an axe, they just chopped open the door, like cut through it, and they basically just messed up everything in there, they poured like ink all over my clothes and stuff.

Q: Do you know who these people were?

A: I'm not sure but like they weren't in there to steal stuff because there was my dad's laptop, all they did was just stamp all over it to break it, they didn't even

bother stealing it. So it was a bit rubbish really. That was just before Glastonbury festival, when I was probably about seven. And like I've had probably, two years ago I woke up in the night and I just heard a load of screeching of tyres and stuff outside and my dad was just completely fast asleep. I looked out of the window and I saw these like two blokes probably about 21/22 and one was going to pick up a big rock and I heard a smash of the window. So I managed to wake dad up, he went out, he like just shouted to get them away but then they came back again, chucked another, like a rock that big, they smashed open the window completely. And they came zooming past, my dad just chucked a rock back really to try and scare them off but they kept coming back and back. And we phoned police because, you know, we were really worried, they seemed really aggressive and yes, police, they didn't get in contact with us, we phoned them again, we had to contact them again, police ended up finally getting in touch with us three days later. So if something happens, you know, no help from them.

Q: That's terrible.

A: But luckily it was starting to get light, so they bugged off to wherever they were from. And yes, we've had a few like stolen cars driven down our track and that but that's mostly about it.

For younger children, especially if linked with experiences of racism in their home neighbourhood, as for the family of Gypsy siblings, racism at school as well could cause serious developmental damage.

Q: So because you've told me about some horrible things that happened when you were in the house, and were you in school when you were there?

A: Yes.

Q: And did you, what were people like to you at school?

A: They were racist to us.

A: To the point I ended up starving myself because I couldn't put up with it no more.

An important strand to emerge within the whole topic concerned young people's strategies for dealing with racism and bullying. Unfortunately the extract just quoted illustrates an extreme strategy of self-harm. Warrington (2006) discussed four strategies employed by young people for managing or avoiding bullying. One of these was to hide their identity, which is also seen in this study in the exchange quoted below.

Q: Are there things you don't like about your college?

A: Yes, that I can't tell people that I live on a site because it's just worse for me if I do.

In the following extract another young person described a second strategy outlined by Warrington, which was to avoid situations where it could arise.

I mainly just got like bullied in primary school and that. There was a few, yes because people from my secondary school went in but I soon like, I try not to aggravate them really, even though they're stupid..

In this situation the young person also sought to make light of its importance by not granting validity to the people responsible, a variant which could be added to Warrington's list. Another young person also employed the strategy of analysing the weak or contradictory basis of discriminatory attitudes.

It's ridiculous though, I mean some of them can be such hypocrites, these bullies, calling you pikies and you hear them like boasting about, oh yes they smashed in this old lady's window the other night. It's just like, these people are so like shallow, yes I don't understand any of them.

This approach is more likely to be available to young people in their teens than younger children. A further variant illustrated in the interviews was to reduce the importance of discrimination by identifying that perpetrators of racism are in the minority.

Because there's always, people sometimes classify, well a lot of the time, Gypsies as people who will steal things and just leave mess and are just horrible and shouty and I have come across that before but it's not what a lot of people are like.

Warrington (2006) described two further strategies (in addition to hiding identity, and avoiding or minimising racism), as being to retaliate, or to report racism to those in authority. However retaliation often leads to further disadvantage for Gypsy young people. The cycle of racist experiences leading to responses that result in exclusion or self-exclusion of Gypsies and Travellers from school has been documented in other studies (Cemlyn et al 2009, Derrington and Kendall 2004, 2007, Jordan 2001). This is also illustrated in this study.

Q: Tell me a little bit more about your school and what you like about it now?

A: One thing what we hate about it

A: The teacher.

Q: The teacher, OK.

A: It's the teachers, every time someone calls us like a name, obviously they don't do it often at school, they call us Gypo.



Q: What, the other pupils?

A: Yes and we tell them to shut up and they won't do it until the point where you get like to fighting a bit, but if we tell them to shut up and then if the teachers, and if they hit us and we hit them back, the teachers will just tell us off and just tell them to go in their lessons and us that might get exclusions.

Self-exclusion as a strategy for self-protection is clearly illustrated in the following extract.

Q: Have you ever been bullied or discriminated against because you are a Traveller or a Gypsy?

A: Yes, loads, I had to leave a school because of bullying from being a Traveller.

The final strategy for dealing with racism discussed by Warrington (2006) was to report it to someone in authority. The young people were explicitly asked if anyone helped them to deal with bullying. There were some positive experiences of seeking support. Sometimes, as was implicit in section 3.iv on Education, this was because a positive whole school approach would provide a strategy to prevent racism and discriminatory bullying becoming an issue.

Q: Have you ever been bullied or discriminated against because you are a Traveller or a Gypsy?

A: I haven't because, like I say, my school's been really understanding. And when I was at primary school, it was a really small school, so like everyone knew you and you knew everyone, there were like eighty of us in the school or something, so it was tiny.

...

A: And it was just really nice because like everyone knew you and understood and if they had a problem or something they'd talk to you about it, they wouldn't just be horrible, so that was quite nice. So I've never really had any trouble.

.....

A: ..... And there was a couple of people, a couple of guys in the year above, which gave me some trouble, I got spat on now and again ...but most, I think my primary school, like the teachers and all that, they were actually really good and most people understood, they were like quite curious about it, you know, that 2% were just like..

However more often it was because of an individual who responded positively. The young Gypsy family conveyed how important a sympathetic teacher could be in providing support.

A: There's one teacher that really cares about us, it's Miss .... She's a religious teacher and she's really nice.

A: She always wants to, she wants to visit us some day.

A: She's always nice to us.

A: She's my tutor teacher, I have her every day...

Q: So she's your tutor but she has something to do with all of you, does she?

A: Yes, she likes us all.

Q: So she's somebody you can go to if things are bad?

A: Yes.

However this support may not be institutionalised within the school, so that it is vulnerable to withdrawal when individuals leave, as the Gypsy family described in a previous school.

Q: So does anybody help you with that at school?

A: Not really.

A: There used to be one person, Mr ..., he used to help us.

A: But he left.

A: He's not there anymore.

Q: Because the school should kind of look into..

.....

A: The teachers wouldn't do nothing about it.

These children had described similar difficulties for their parents in gaining assistance to deal with neighbour harassment, in a passage already quoted above in full in section 3.i, and selectively repeated here.

Q: Did anybody help you when these things were happening?

A: No, we tried, we told them, the council but they wouldn't do nothing.

....

Q: So ..your parents tried to get help with what was happening ...?

A: Yes but they always, police always took their side of the story and my dad had a go at them and they said, cool down mate ...and that's how we got evicted. They were the ones who started it.

A: Because my dad was a Traveller, they said they're frightened my dad might hurt their car.

Several of the young people described having little faith in teachers to resolve the problems, because of lack of serious attention to the issues. This could often result in a resigned or fatalistic attitude to experiencing discrimination among the young people, as reported in other studies (e.g. Greenfields et al 2007).

Q: Did anyone help you deal with it?

A: Not really, I didn't really bother going to the teacher about bullies, I just like, I mean out of school, you know, police weren't any help at all. They would say, oh yes, we'll write it down and that's it. I didn't really bother just talking to anyone about it, just thought, oh what's the point, spread that sadness on someone else, what's happening, so yes.

-----

Q: Did anyone help you with this?

A: No, not really. We just sort of stayed in our own little group, didn't really end up bonding with other people.

A lack of response from teachers to complaints of bullying, combined with what is experienced as constant reprimands about their own behaviour, could lead to strong feelings of unfairness.

A: If we tell them stuff they just don't listen. We report it all the time and they don't do nothing.

A: And other people report us and we get told off all the time.

Q: So what would you like to see happen?

A: Teachers kind of like help us more, I don't know, they should take it more seriously instead of taking them more seriously.

Reporting racism might lead to unskilled responses that undermined autonomy and self-esteem in other ways.

A: I don't know, they did try and help at secondary school once but they were really, I hated it because they were really patronising about it. And it's like, they'd talk to you in the third person and everything and it's like, is that OK, is that all right? And it was just really horrible to have something like that around. So I didn't really tell family because I mean at the end of the day, there's not much you can do, I mean it's not nice but it is, I mean everyone in their life is going to get bullied.

Beyond this, responses to requests for assistance with bullying might be non-respectful or even intensify the experience of prejudice.

A: I never really have had any trouble but I know some people that have and they've tried going to people and some people have been OK from it and some people would just, would rather they kept to themselves and stuff, they got worse from going to teachers and friends and things.

A: Yes, I've heard a couple of stories, really prejudiced teachers, they have just really messed them about even more.

A: Yes, like we've had people being better off keeping it to themselves.

A young New Traveller who had friends in the settled population received some support from friends, but essentially handled the situation alone.

Q: Did anyone help you to deal with this?

A: Sort of, my mates, talking to mates and that but not really

Amongst some of the young people there was also discussion about how supportive family and older friends might be. Experience varied from one young person finding that her parent was unable to provide helpful, patient attention, to another who could talk to her parent easily, although some issues might be hard for them both to handle, to an experience of being able to talk more readily to her parents' friends, who 'are like my family', but also had little more distance than a parent, which could be helpful in such situations.

This group of three young women spontaneously identified the Children's Society worker as someone they could go to in difficult situations.

Unfortunately the range of discriminatory experiences and often unhelpful responses reported in this section reflect a range of other findings on the extensive discrimination and prejudice experienced by Gypsies and Travellers (Cemlyn et al 2009, Commission for Racial Equality 2006, Richardson 2007).

## **Friendships**

The young people were asked what was most important to them about their friendships, whether they had friends who were not Gypsies or Travellers, and whether anything made it difficult to be friends with people who were not Gypsies and Travellers.

Friendship was a theme of central importance among some of the New Traveller young people.

My friends are kind of like everything that I stand for really, I love my friends.  
.....if you had to stop almost everything and you had to choose one thing, I

would choose my friends definitely, like friends are everything to me. So yes, I've got a fair few friends but they're like, some I'm really close to and some I'm not but all of them are like really important to me.

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Q: What is most important to you about your friendships?

A: Everyone on site's really close and we all care about each other loads.

-----

Q: What is most important to you about your friendships?

A: Just generally getting on with people, my friends, just like my family, basically, love them

All the young people described having friends who were not Gypsies and Travellers, as well as those who were. The friendship groups could be very wide.

The younger Gypsy family described easy going relationships with settled young people.

Q: And are they all quite cool about you being Gypsies?

A: Yes.

-----

Q: So are they interested in your lives as Gypsies or do you just get on with?

A: They're fine with it.

A: They've visited quite a few times.

Q: And do you visit their houses?

A: Yes, I'm staying over theirs tonight, we're going to a party later

They acknowledged that some other children were prejudiced, but they responded with apparent assertiveness and mutual support among the siblings.

If anyone calls us a name we just say, leave them alone.

For two young men living on a private site and in a house respectively, at first there seemed to be little to distinguish friends from the different groups, and no barriers were identified to having non-Traveller friends.

I don't know really, pretty well everyone's just mates.

However a further probe revealed that there could be an additional closeness with other young Travellers.

Q: They're all mates, you don't think about whether they're Travellers or not?

A: No, my closest mates have all come from a Traveller background, I don't know. I know people who live in houses.

One of the young women described in detail her different circles of friendship, including having many friends from her own and other years in school, her father's friends, and festival friends. This included very diverse groups that worked very well for her.

They're all like, it's like split personalities kind of but like when you mix it all together it stills works quite well and I like that.

She appreciated the strengths of the different groups, and it appeared possible to live easily between the different worlds, enjoying each in its own way. However, although it felt strange to reflect on these issues, the Traveller world contained stronger bonds, echoing the theme of framing friendship in terms of family relationships.

In school time it's all OK, maybe some weekends, but when you're at festivals and stuff, you just want to slip back into that kind of, with the Gypsy and Travellers friends and that. It's like, yes you get on better. I don't know, it seems more likely that my Gypsy and Traveller friends, I don't know, it's weird calling them that. But if you fall out with them, it's like a much more big deal but you always make up, they're more like family, like kind of sisters. Like you're still good friends with other people but these are more like closely knit under the surface or something.

She developed this theme further to describe the New Traveller culture and friendships in spiritual terms.

I've got so many friends that are just non Travellers and non Gypsies and things. I think like, I love hanging out with them because they've got their own point of view on life and things like that, but people that are like Travellers and Gypsies, they've got totally different inspiration. Like to hang out with them is like going back to what you really believe in. It's like if you were religious then you hang out with your own religion because they believe the same as you do and they inspire you into believing everything, it's kind of the same with Traveller friends. It's like your own little religion and like your creativity.

However another young person found increasing difficulty to meet new Gypsies and Travellers with whom to form friendships. This echoed themes from the Accommodation section about friendship groups being broken up because of the difficulties of finding secure accommodation.

It's getting harder and harder to like meet new friends, like Gypsies and Travellers it seems. There's like not so many about and I don't get so many

chances just to meet up with like a load of new people and that because, you know, to travel about a bit more and people are more just staying in their place a bit more.

There was also quite nuanced discussion of what might make it hard to be friends with non Travellers or Gypsies, which might encompass a lack of understanding and the difficulties of explaining lifestyle differences.

Q: Is there anything that makes it difficult to be friends with non Travellers or Gypsies?

A: Sometimes because it's quite hard to explain and they don't understand about it and that.

-----

Q: Is there anything that makes it difficult to be friends with non Travellers or Gypsies?

A: Not really, apart from like the fact that they don't realise, like they don't have the same views as me and they just don't really understand it that much but they do like it as well, some of them do, some of them don't.

There could also be difficulties for the non-Traveller young people in being friends with Travellers, because of receiving prejudice by association.

Yes because basically they don't want to be bullied or anything. They don't want to be, well not so much anymore but they don't want to be in that situation where they have to stand next to you and they get, oh you're friends with Gypsies or something like that and then they get bullied as well.

## **Leisure activities**

The young people were asked what they liked doing in their own time, if there were other activities they would like to be involved in, and anything that made it difficult to participate.

The first question produced quite a wide range of responses as might be expected from any group of young people. For example, participants referred to reading, listening to music, dancing, going out with friends, riding a moped around, going to parties, and (in a house) playing on the computer. The young people based on family sites with planning permission discussed community based activities such as communal evenings round a fire with food to share, playing of instruments and singing, though this happened much less recently. There was also a strong theme amongst this group of participating in festivals, and the social and cultural connections involved.

I enjoy going to festivals and being with people. I mean sometimes I like being on my own but I prefer to be with more people and bring happiness.

There were also aspirations to set up such events, for example a festival for children in a nearby field.

A: Not really so much for me, anything kind of like, it would be quite nice to have some like music thing and just meet a few people, like just children, where children can meet up sometimes, that would be great, like once a year, like the festival, like a little children one, that would be really cool.

A: You know what, we have an empty field at the top and it's really big and we were trying to plan like a mini festival to go in the top field.

One young person on a family site picked up the theme of appreciation of and involvement in the countryside that was reflected on in relation to accommodation earlier.

..But if I'm at home I'll go out for long walks and things and there's a hill up behind us that we call the top of the world because it's got like two hills coming in and then a hole, it's kind of like a little funnel of a view and it kind of pans out and you can see it, you can see over the top of the hills. So I go up there a lot and then there's a stream at the bottom of our road that's got really nice secret little wooden bits, it's really nice down there as well, so I go down there all the time.

The younger Gypsy children referred to taking the dog for a walk, football, and one was already a skilled boxer involved in teaching others, having learnt from his father and grandfather.

There was reference to an aspiration for a monthly youth club where Gypsy and Traveller young people could meet up, reflecting the point in the previous section about it being harder now to make new friendships among Gypsies and Travellers because of the pressures on the way of life.

Two of the young women who interviewed each other referred to wanting to participate in a voluntary project overseas helping to build a school. However this brought up some of the obstacles arising from being a Traveller to this kind of involvement, in terms of less familiarity with form-filling and fund-raising, and the prejudice encountered from being a Traveller.

Q: Is there anything that makes it difficult to be involved in these activities?

A: Yes because we've had to move around so much you don't really know much about filling in all the forms, so you need help with that and raising money and people, it's harder to raise money because you're a Traveller because they just look at you in a different way, so yes it is.

The young people on more isolated family sites discussed considerable transport difficulties that prevented them from visiting friends and engaging in activities. They were often far from bus stops, which had very limited and infrequent services. They



were dependent on their parents' transport, which brought further barriers because the vehicles might not be reliable, they might have to wait late at night to be collected, or their parent might be very reluctant to give lifts at all.

### **9.11 Hopes for the future**

The young people were asked what they would like to do in the future, where they would like to be living, and what might make their plans difficult.

Career plans were varied and included hairdressing, boxing, mechanics, having a self-employed business of some kind, performing arts in order to work in festivals, or running a business such as providing benders and domes for events and cafes at festivals. Some young people referred to immediate plans to travel the world and experience other cultures, a pattern common to some other young people in early adulthood, but for some this had a clear cultural importance. The theme of working in festivals was elaborated by three young women, and linked with the desire to continue experiencing and contributing to the vitality of New Traveller culture.

A: Travel around the world. Oh my god, that would be so cool...maybe in groups and we arranged to meet up every now and again ..... we can maybe just park in a little show to make money, you know, yes that's what we need.

A: Well I'm going to college to do performing arts next year, whichever one I get into, I hope I get in. And that's going to be hopefully be me working in festivals then and then like that will base around travelling.

A: I would quite like to work in .....my dad..used to run all the cafes at Glastonbury festival and all the other festivals and he used to put up like big domes and benders and then have like all natural cafes inside and they were really nice. So I'd quite like to travel and do something like that....

Like other young people however, plans might be quite fluid.

And then also, I don't know, I quite like painting, I'm not really sure where I want to go with life, it's just things that I enjoy I'd quite like to carry on with.

There was an aspiration to make a difference, while having the flexibility that comes with self-employment.

But I want something that's going to make an impact as well but I don't want to be stuck in the same, I'm definitely not doing one of these 9 to 5 office jobs, definitely not. That would be the end really.

Training or further or higher education was identified by most of the young people as necessary to their plans. Some also acknowledged the need for advice, and one pointed to the importance of contacts when setting up in business.

Training and a bit of advice I reckon yes

I need decent college to do performing arts to go to festivals and get myself into festivals.

I just need contacts, getting to know the right people really. Get the skills and all of that and then just see where I go from there really

The location of such training or education was usually not specified, but for one young person going to college was combined with wanting to live in a particular small coastal town she had visited that was attractive to artists.

.. I would quite like to go to college in somewhere like (name of town)... and I'd climb up the like light towers or something like that or lighthouse, and just sit on top of the buildings and then I'd just paint the surroundings. And it's really, really peaceful there and I'd quite like to experience living there for a bit and being in the same place.

Some young people clearly identified that they wanted to live on a stable site, with their family and /or with their friends. The obstacles that were referred to throughout the interviews included the current lack of access to basic facilities, the threat of being moved on, the prejudice they encountered, and the impact on policies and practice towards Gypsies and Travellers.

All that we want is a place to go on with electric and water and all that.

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And there's been some people helping my mum in court, like Mr ..., that's it, we have to get kicked off because the people they're voting for hates Gypsies.

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Q: Where would you like to be living?

A: On a site with my mates and my family.

Q: What might make these things difficult?

A: Just the attitude of people.

Others, as indicated, preferred the thought of travelling around.

Q: Where would you like to be living and what might make these things difficult?

A: I don't really want to live anywhere, I want to keep moving around, I don't know.

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## Self-definition

In the process of discussing experiences of discrimination, there were some reflections from both New Travellers and Romany Gypsies about the differences between the two groups. While they shared very similar experiences in relation to accommodation difficulties and to discrimination, from their different perspectives they also saw it as important that the distinction between the groups was clear. For the Romany Gypsies, origins, family and culture from birth are seen as key to ethnic identity.

All the people say whoever lives in caravans are Gypsies, that's what they say.

You can't be a Gypsy, you have to be brought up as one when you're born.

New Travellers were conscious of being subject to the same stereotypes as Gypsies. While the following extract from a three person interview did not define their own sense of themselves, this had been clearly expressed in other sections of the interview, for example in relation to closeness to friends and to 'nature', enjoyment and aspirations for travelling. For them it seemed that being seen as Gypsies ignored New Traveller identity.

Q: I've got a supplementary question, do people ever bully you thinking you are a Gypsy rather than a New Traveller? ...

They just think we're all the same really.

It might be different if they understood the difference between them ...  
..And I don't think they understand the divide between that, Gypsies and New Travellers, and so it's all kind of one thing and they think that's just what everyone's about.

.....  
I don't think people even realise that there is a difference between a Gypsy and a New Traveller.

I don't think they know there's New Travellers, they just think Gypsies and Travellers.

Yes, everyone's just a Gypsy or Pikey. They don't know, they don't even find the difference between that, there's no difference as far as they're concerned.

## Children's Society Support

The focus group event itself reflected the strong engagement of the Children's Society with Gypsy and Traveller young people, and the work they undertake to enable these young people to have a voice and participate in activities and debates.

One interview with a young woman and her child illustrated the kind of support to individuals that the Children's Society also provides. They had supported her over

more than a decade. This involved provision as a child when a playbus was brought on site (National Playbus Association nd), and more recent and intensive support in relation to pregnancy and childbirth, homelessness following a house fire, and gaining treatment for her disabled child.

They took me to all my midwife appointments and the health visitors and supported me after I had the baby and they still support me now.

I had a fire at my house and I got made homeless and they supported me and got me into a B&B, which was horrible. And now I've got a flat, which they helped me get, which is really nice.

Three young women interviewed had spontaneously identified the Children's Society worker as someone to whom they could turn if they experienced bullying or other difficulties, while they were unable to name any other professional who could provide this support.

The groupwork and participation work undertaken by the Children's Society enables isolated young people to make important connections and friendships that affirm their identity and their culture.

That's why I'm really glad that I've become part of you guys so much, because I've met you two at least and other people as well, because I always used to think, well there's no one around anymore that's got the inspiration to go out and travel.

### **What they would like councils to know about the lives of young Gypsies and Travellers**

The final question to the young people about what they would like councils to know about their lives yielded a range of comments, that serve well as the conclusion to this report.

Q: Are there things that you think should be better for Travellers?

A: They don't just evict them.

.....

A: Offer them land.

....

A: They should make more sites but not council sites.

.....

A: I would, if I had enough money I would buy the land and put a site on it.

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Yes, just don't tar everyone with the same brush because you don't, everyone's not the same. It's like we're just the same as you, apart from we live in a trailer and we prefer living in a trailer than living in a house, that's it really

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Instead of like moving all the time, that's all, we don't mind. We just want to stay somewhere and just settle down.

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It's not an easy life but it's not a hard life.

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Just that we're the same as them, normal people.

## **Conclusions**

Young people had strong feelings about culture and lifestyle, school and accommodation. They showed that they wanted to be treated like other young people and not have assumptions made about them because of who they were. Ideas were suggested on what they would like to see on an ideal site, and these have been included in chapter five of this report on future provision of sites.

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## APPENDIX F

### FOCUS ON: NEW TRAVELLERS

#### Background

The focus group was arranged and co-convened by staff from the Robert Barton Trust utilising their extensive networks and long-term contact with New Travellers across the study area. Margaret Greenfields (BNU) and Emma Nuttall of FFT facilitated the session (which was also supported by Traveller staff of the Robert Barton Trust) which took place in the downstairs meeting space/café of the Robert Barton Trust offices in Glastonbury on 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2010.

The core theme of the focus group was attitudes towards types of accommodation and in particular the attitude towards use of community land trusts as a mechanism for site provision for New Travellers.

#### Participants

Eight New Traveller participants (3 female and 5 male) took part in the session.

Participants were aged between their mid 30s and mid 50s and the majority had children either residing with them or who were present and living independently at the same (or a local) site. The housed participant was living with one young adult child although they spent considerable periods of time at local sites visiting friends and family.

All but one person were living on sites, which had a variety of legal statuses. Approximately half of participants were living in motorised vehicles (although in one case they also had horses) one participant (male in his 50s, lone parent) was residing in a caravan with adjacent yurt; two people were living in horse-drawn wagons and, one woman and her family lived in a house although she had previously been both horse-drawn and resident in a motorised vehicle. The travelling history of the members of the focus group ranged from 15 to 25 years 'on the road'. All individuals stated that their ideal form of accommodation would be on a site of some description. The single housed person stated that: *"Ideally I would like to live with all my mates on a bit of land and not be moved on or [be] illegal really"*.

#### Topics

##### Accommodation (current)

Apart from the woman living in housing and one participant who renting a pitch on a private site with planning permission, all others were dwelling on unauthorised sites. The Travellers taking part in the focus group had all managed to achieve relative stability of accommodation at the time of the interview although for the two 'horse drawn' people difficulties could occur because of the necessity of moving on *"before the grazing comes to an end"*.

The woman living with her husband and family on an authorised site (travelling throughout the summer with a mobile stage and working at festivals under their Association of Independent Showmen's (AIS) membership) stressed the security and advantages associated with being able to remain at a single location for some period of time

*"I'm quite happy where I am but have the knowledge that I'm safe there and can go and buy a showmans trailer.....If I'm going to be there for a couple of years I'm going to get a week to go [rather than be evicted a very short notice] with my little one. I quite like to have a bit of security".*

Two participants reporting living at the same long-standing private *"unofficially tolerated site... I pay rent"* . *"it's not official but I am there, have been for a while"*

Whilst two others were also *"living under the radar"* in one case tucked away *"in a trailer"* on a large piece of privately owned land and the other *"[we] live in a caravan on the Green Lane and been there for about 15 years and still won't tell anyone where it is"* [to avoid the risk of eviction or other Travellers moving onto the site and attracting undue attention]

The horse-drawn Travellers whilst noting that access to grazing impacted on their duration of residence were respectively *"living..... with a farmer, doing work for him"*

And *"in a horse drawn caravan on a 'mooring site' which is official tolerated which means they know its there but [leave us alone]"*.

## **Accommodation preferences**

- **'Mixed' or mono-cultural Sites**

In the main although participants did not express a clear preference for mono-cultural sites, some discussion occurred about the different cultures amongst Travelling people. Essentially the comment about the different needs and wants of different groups of travelling people (see below) and the over-whelming findings from GTAA's and other research evidence which suggests that 'ethnic' / 'traditional' Gypsies and Travellers prefer to live amongst their own communities would suggest that sites explicitly for New Travellers would be preferred although if Green Lanes and traditional halting places were opened up (see below) inevitably some form of sharing of space would occur.

- **Site 'type' preferences**

Although all participants clearly identified that they wished to live on a site, significant variation existed in relation to accommodation preference. Participants were eager to point out that a 'one size fits all' approach to accommodation could cause undue constraints for members of the diverse communities:

*“there’s a lot of different communities living in this travelling community and so many people with different needs and wants, are you going to have a transit pitch for horse drawn and a pitch for vehicles or Gypsies, or what. We are not under the same umbrella and I think that’s a lot of the problem”.*

The **horse-drawn Travelling community** whilst recognising that they are in some ways regarded as more ‘picturesque’ by both members of the public and potentially more likely to be tolerated by local authorities or officialdom are confronted by particular difficulties.

Not only are busy roads hazardous to horses and a number of routes do not offer appropriately broad lay-bys for halting, but some individuals had experienced particular problems over evictions when police or local authorities had failed to understand, or deliberately ignored the impacts of travelling with a live animal rather than a motorised vehicle:

*“for horse drawn you need things a lot closer together”*

*“I’ve had to move wagons cos we’ve had lame horses so I’ve had to move my wagon ahead and try to ride my horse back... to help other people with their wagons with police forming lines through the street to stop me getting my horse back there so that they can pile on the pressure under Section 61. They were threatening to take the kids the animals, everything”.*

Horse-drawn Travellers were clear that with their slower pace of life they explicitly engaged with a green philosophy which could potentially be utilised to assist in improving the environment through which they travel:

*“for friends of mine on the road is that its more about the freedom to travel the country, much like the rights to roam for walkers, there should be something like that for Travellers that look after the area. A lot of people that I’ve travelled with in the last 15 years we go to a place and ‘cos we want to live there for a couple of weeks, we clear up all the rubbish that’s been left there by the council in all the parks”.*

*“I’ve even spoken to the council when they’ve evicted me while I wait for a farrier saying I’ve just been in that tennis court and picked up all the glass that was there”.*

Whilst (see further below) a high number of participants reported a preference for access to traditional sites and Green Lanes (although acknowledging the management issues of such site usage which could be problematic), horse drawn Travellers had significant constraints on the distance which they could travel in a day before resting the animals and also in ensuring that once they were stopped (whether on lay-bys or using a Green Lane or farm land with the permission of the farmer, perhaps in exchange for a few days work) adequate safe grazing was available:



*“The whole horse thing does add a dimension to it because you can only stay on the same bit of grass for so long so there does need to be another bit of land management if you’re going to keep horses in one place”*

*“And there’s grazing issues when we get farmers spraying things like dandelion which has given my horse colic and nearly killed her and that was on a verge that was sprayed over from a cricket pitch”.*

Travel following traditional routes and then stopping on land owned by statutory agencies such as the National Trust and Forestry Agency were identified as a clear preference for people travelling in this manner:

*“I had an encounter with the head forester of the National Trust and he was saying that grazing by horse, the way they graze is sympathetic to some wild flowers. It’s quite compatible for a horse to graze and for a rich downland to be preserved. There is a mutual benefit. There are a lot of different pollens on their feet. The synergies that could be there”*

*“and the Forestry Commission used to be very good”.*

Particular concerns were expressed by horse-drawn Travellers that if a network of transit sites were made available that not only would these not be suitable for people with horses but that they would be required to move onto such sites regardless of the practicalities of reaching such a location or the facilities thereon:

*“Once sites are put in place, you will be evicted Section 61 [using s61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994] and straight to the nearest transit site which is what they’ve tried to do for years and years, at Stonehenge and Amesbury, where they’ve been Section 61 with horse-drawn Travellers making them do 30 miles [a good average distance for a horse pulling a typical wagon weighing ¾ of a tonne is 12 miles in daylight starting in the morning] at 5.30 in the afternoon to get to Salisbury which is the nearest transit site to Amesbury. Just lining the roads, forcing us to go on in the dark and blocking everything off.....”*

When considering Community Land Trusts (see further below) horse-drawn participants were generally less enthusiastic about the option than were other participants – whilst noting that

*“The idea is it would be nice to have a base so that we can leave stuff there but have a base to come home to but I do basically want to take my horses out on the road, work at festivals”.*

The practicalities of their circumstances –the requirements for access to water and grazing and perhaps stabling, meant that they felt land management issues could be problematic if resident long-term at a location with a number of people living on a small plot of land for a relatively long period of time with their animals.

Several participants (all types of living accommodation) noted that they would be happy to either utilise private sites or traditional stopping places such as low-impact Green Lanes as long as they were “*left alone*”. Some discussion arose over the fact that across the West Country some landowners are known to provide a discreet service by enabling small groups of Travellers (or individual families) to reside on their land in exchange for help with labour or a low rental charge, although typically no planning permission exists for these ‘*below the radar*’ arrangements.

*“Being under private rental.[residents of private ‘unofficially tolerated’ unauthorised site]. the only thing I’m not happy about is that you don’t have the security and at the drop of a hat you could have to go – which happened to us last summer. All he did was move us up the road but he gave us a letter and said next week we’re going to be chopping down the woodland, really sorry, if there is anything I can do to help.. but it was a week and we’d been there nearly a year, you’ve sort of settled, the vehicles aren’t legal to get back on the road... but thankfully he was great and let us move onto his [other bit of land] but you are still at the mercy...because you’ve got no rights and could still have to go.. I’d like to have security but still be on a private pitch”*

*“I think it is true for a number of places, you aren’t meant to be there but you still pay your rent”*

For individuals living at either ‘tolerated’ or authorised sites the luxury of having even limited security was regarded as a the key benefit of their circumstances, enabling them to access employment, health care and education for their children.

*“as soon as you have sites which are stable you can start to work, to bring the money in”*

*“you need somewhere to park so that you can get the kids to school and all the rest of it”*

Both participants living in vehicles and those who are horse-drawn had amassed enough years of travelling experience to note that the increased rates of closure and erosion of traditional stopping places has had a significant impact on their ability to live quietly and discreetly at rural locations in a manner which does not impact on other residents of a locality.

*“[We] Just want to carry on living at the side of the road or places that are parked for years that have been illegally blocked by farmers and councils sometimes, a lot of farmers that stick machinery and boulders at the end of drives. People start planting trees along roadside verges to stop us pulling on there”.*

*“there are traditional parking places that everyone knows about that have been used for years and years and its really annoying when you get to a place and find its been ditched and then you’ve got to start the whole process of looking for somewhere else”*

Amongst the particular participants in the focus group (although this may not hold true of all New Travellers) a very clear preference was found for utilising a mixture of private sites – perhaps on a short-term basis - and traditional halting places. The members of the focus group, drawing upon their extensive local knowledge and history of travelling were articulate both about the benefits of freely available traditional stopping places and the impacts on local people of Travellers being forced to move on continually or stop at inappropriate places where they caused nuisance to local housed residents:

*“I like different types of accommodation at different types of the year and different stages of my life so there is not one answer to that question. I appreciate my daughter is happy at school but I do want to break out and travel round a bit and feel constrained. I would prefer green lanes as there are green lanes everywhere and in my youth I didn’t have to find out if there was anyone I knew living in the area, I didn’t have to find out if there were any camping sites in the area, I just knew if I went to that market town in that county there would be 4/5 green lanes around it and I could use one and that’s what I want”.*

*“ Why don’t they open up Street Common which is a nice large common which already has a YMCA on it, it has a water supply, grazing, not a particularly busy road”.*

*“Open them all [Green Lanes and traditional halting places] and there will be enough to go round”*

*“All the bridleways are blocked off, all the droves are blocked off, all the verges have got trees planted in the middle of them”*

*“a lot of those old places did have a water supply and that’s why they were chosen as stopping places because of the access to water. As well as stopping us parking up there it then forces us to park in an unsuitable place where there is no water supply”.*

Horse-drawn participants reported that despite the fact that their form of Travelling is often regarded by housed residents in a more favourable light than are Travellers in vehicles: policy and practice which has resulted in the closure of traditional halting places, Green Lanes and bridle paths had led to conflict with local residents at times:

*“It forces Travellers further into town as well. A couple of years ago there was a lot of articles in the Gazette.....somebody was moaning that there were horse drawn travellers too close to the centre of Glastonbury on Roman Way and people complained saying why don’t they just go a bit further out of town and I wrote back saying that all the roads that we used to park on, we’ve had conversations with the RSPB who have come down and checked when we were on their land out on the levels and they said everything is fine, you keep the place tidy and its great, then you move onto another pitch to get a more grass and they come in and ditch and fence everywhere we’ve just been even though there was no problem. They still close off and close off and then people have to go into town and then people in town get*

*annoyed with that. Then it all starts this fever in the papers and all the rest of it and that's where it all comes from. No-one ever mentions that its because all the other places have been taken away and even within my travelling life time of 13/14 years, there were loads more places available than there are now".*

## **Preference for Site Size/Design**

This element of the discussion is relevant for planning of both private, public and Community Land Trust sites as well as the management of Green Lanes and traditional stopping places.

Participants were clear that different 'types' of Traveller and also those whose circumstances altered across the life span were likely to have different needs. One (motorised) Traveller noted that from his work undertaking GTAA interviews for the current study he had formed an opinion that:

*"There is a group of people who want a quiet park up with about 6-8 pitches on it, that seems quite popular, the other contingent seems to be people would prefer to live on a larger site with 20-30 vehicles which is generally kind of the younger generation, more .... the vehicle travellers. Not all of them younger but generally people to tend to like having a few people around and it is mostly .... perhaps people that are coming up towards retirement type age that are thinking of a quiet field somewhere with a few pitches on it, or possibly people that are working who want somewhere safe to store their stuff to be able to leave it".*

Despite acknowledging that some Travellers might prefer larger sites the focus group participants were clear that a maximum size was required to minimise conflict both between site residents and amongst the surrounding communities who might feel intimidated by seeing large groups of Travellers:

*"With a big field things do tend to get left there when people are away doing other things and that's very frightening to a [settled] community 'cos they look at a big site and there's probably only 20 people living there but it looks like 60".*

*"I think probably 30 vehicles is getting up to the limit when things become too impractical with the community. The larger sites do attract a lot of vehicles that aren't lived in when people are away and if you have a big field it's difficult to say no to someone. Big fields fill up until there is no room to fill them anymore and I don't think anyone likes that"*

The pressures on well established tolerated sites caused by the shortfall in provision and decreasing tolerated park-ups had been experienced by all participants. Considerable discussion ensued on the way in which these pressures impact on the social and practical functioning of a site:

*"That's what's wrong with the Moorland site there's a big hole in the middle of the site and more and more trailers fill up the edges ....you never talk to each other and*

*if you're 'clanning' ... its important to have some sort of central focus so that people do sit out together, talk to each other ..."*

Hygiene concerns were also cited where large sites existed (particularly unauthorised sites with limited access to services:

*"Its just not pleasant living on top of each other. Dogs shit everywhere, it just turns into an unpleasant experience which is why having been on [sites with] only 4/5 pitches for the last couple of years I wouldn't go back to living with a large group of people...loads of people [so] you don't know their names".*

Parents of young children also endorsed the fact that having smaller 'family-type' sites offered security which was not available when a large number of people were resident at a single over-crowded location:

*"Not even sure who's living there....."*

*"That's going to have an impact on those that have children, how safe you feel and the more you get together the more security you get. I know there's been time when I lived in lots of different places with my kids at different points in my life".*

The shortage of authorised sites meant that some parents reported that in addition to well-recognised disadvantages (e.g disrupted education) experienced by children on unauthorised sites, other potentially negative impacts (such as social isolation) could affect their children when families had been forced to live alone or with only one or two other people (in order that they were relatively invisible if residing at traditional sites, or to avoid 'large party-type' sites')

*"That's a problem with us not being able to live together, the kids get bored just because you get more pressure by trying to live with another family that has kids so the kids can play with each other, people can child-sit so you can go out and get everything you need and then someone is on the camp so you can share taking the kids to school (if you've got a good liaison officer) ..... but you need somewhere to park so you can get the kids to school"*

### **Transit provision on residential sites**

In contrast to most 'traditional' Gypsies and Travellers who (in the experience of the research team) tend to record a preference for visitors stopping for a short time on a permanent pitch with relatives or friends but not having separate transit pitches on sites; the New Traveller interviewees seemed well disposed to the concept of mixed transit/permanent provision at one location.

*"Personally speaking I like big and small sites and have no real preference to be honest. I get on well on both. I suppose if I had to choose I would probably go for 6-8 pitches but I do think the ideas of transit pitches is good as there are people going through. It is like a breath of fresh air things being different on a transit park".*

*“I think you have to have visitor pitches”*

Considerable discussion occurred as to the value and enforceability of transit pitch provision if authorised sites were delivered and managed by Travellers themselves, or if groups of Travellers developed Community Land Trust sites:

*“I think there is an issue about the CLT and sites in general being provided by Mendip or whichever council - just in policing them. [We] have been talking about this..... we are talking about having or not having transit on a site where you can have residential use as well. Who makes the decision? Who can come in? How much do they pay per night and do you then become policeman that has been giving you hell for the last 20 years? “*

### **Site Design**

No participant wished to live on a traditional Gypsy/Traveller site with a preponderance of hard standing to grass:

*“These sites they want to create and create now are just like concrete places” ...  
“surrounded by a fence”*

However it was noted by several people that the residents of new permanent sites should be consulted prior to the development of the facility as their preferences would vary:

*“Some people are going to want hard core and hard standing and all the rest of it and other will need low impact development, locally sourced materials”.*

*“any land that any group finds is going to be more suitable for people in trucks and trailers or suitable for horses. We are looking at two bits of land with totally different eyes. We will look and think that’s good and vice versa”*

Horse drawn participants also raised the issue of having sites which were *“big enough for grazing”* noting that *“it depends how many people are coming through”*

In particular they noted that their needs were different from motorised Travellers in that:

*“a winter park up covered in tarmac is no good if you’re taking 3 or 4 horses. That’s all I wanted in the first place....”*

General agreement was found in relation to the point that residents of sites who were planning to live together from the facility’s inception (whether on a newly laid out RSL, private or CLT site) should where possible be pre (or self) selected to ensure compatibility and a shared vision of how a site should be:

*“And that’s why its important that the people live together have a common interest or need, like you’ve all got small children, all musicians, all horse drawn or something in common that holds you together”.*

The type of design proposed for authorised sites proposed by one woman (resident in a vehicle) and broadly speaking endorsed by the other participants was as follows:

*"I think it would be good to have a base and really all we want is a field with a water supply and somewhere that we could park vehicles, possibly with some sort of communal focus, like a kind of garden/commune. Not really a house but like a kind of meeting area in the middle of it"*

Horse-drawn focus group participants and those individuals whose favoured place of residence was on a Green Lane (which are typically long, thin sites) or on traditional halting spots whilst stating that a site only really needed:

*"a water supply... and space"*

also broadly endorsed the value of having a community hub where contact could be made with other residents:

*"Just have a notice board or something like that where people can just chalk something on....you're looking to see if there's any bread in there, if someone has left a communal space etc"*

*"otherwise it just turns into a place where everyone parks their vehicle and it is safe but its not a community. You have to have something about it where people are putting an effort into doing something together that's what makes it a site rather than just a group of vehicles parked up".*

*"it's quite important to have that communal space in the middle as well, like you say [otherwise you have] people wandering around and you're not really sure if they live there or not".*

## **Provision of Sites**

As participants were all individuals who were eager to discuss CLTs (see below) only limited discussion occurred of other types of public/RSL provided sites. What was self evident from the conversation around site design is that should local authorities elect to develop publicly funded sites then care should be taken to consult with the residents to ensure that the cultural needs of New Travellers were met.

A brief discussion took place in relation to the delivery of sites by RSLs and participants envisaged a model which consisted of access to sites tied to learning and training opportunities. This form of site provision (such as those successfully piloted by Friends Families and Travellers in the 1990s when they operated 'woodland skills' courses where New Travellers spent some weeks/months living at a woodland site learning and receiving certification for accessing training in a range of marketable skills such as coppicing and woodworking, chain saw work etc) would

offer a half-way house between permanent and transit provision by public sector landowners.

*“I remember.....there was talk of all the Travellers moving into the woodlands and doing green woodwork course and then that sort of disappeared....”*

*“Lots of people got some sort of arrangements going when they were coppicing for little or no wages and lived in the woods and I remember it being a really big thing then [it] disappeared”.*

Such a model of site delivery would have the inestimable benefit of providing skills based training perhaps linked to employment for land-owners and would meet a number of recommendations and targets proposed by the EHRC review of inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers (Cemlyn et. al., 2009) which emphasised the low skill base and lack of employment of many Gypsies and Travellers. The involvement of a Northants County Council and the Forestry Commission in such a (proposed) scheme was regarded with significant approval by the focus group participants.

*“There was an approach about a year ago by somebody working through Northants Council. They wanted to set up some sort of alternative living thing incorporating the Forestry Commission but they weren’t sure where they wanted to go with it - whether it was going to be like a visitors centre where people could come and learn rural skills or whether it was going to be like a community .... but generally it was about people living in the woods and low impact. I was started asking questions who were you working for and what’s going on generally and I had a headed letter from the council or from the Forestry Commission confirming it all and it seemed to dry up”.*

Private sites managed in a fairly low-key manner by land-owners were also regarded positively by participants. Particular reference was made to a private authorised site in Herefordshire which is known to comprise of mainly New Travellers (and one or two ‘local’ Romany Gypsies) on long-term stays, with occasional transit visitors. In the main, although a ‘light-touch’ management style which tended to be found in sites with a ‘green’ ethos and a low level of set facilities was preferred, some concerns were expressed over the duration of stay /extent of security/notice required prior to movement. (and see above per quotations regarding private sites and requirements to move at a few days notice after a lengthy stay)

*“Have you been to Upper Hill [?] in Herefordshire [private authorised site]. It’s run by a farmer but it has got caravans, buses, anyone can park up there. There is only a certain number of pitches but it is private. ...that’s the sort of thing people would like”*

Collectively owned land (similar to CLTs although privately financed using other funds) were also identified as a model which could be utilised to provide effectively functioning sites

.



*“There are some communities up there, Tinkers Bubble [Somerset], The [Tipi Valley] in mid Wales is a massive piece of land and people have got plots, its like a village....”*

## **Community Land Trusts (CLTs)**

The major part of the focus group discussion concerned CLTs. This topic was revisited on several occasions throughout the course of the session. The participants were all familiar with the concept of CLTs and wished to discuss the feasibility of such alternative modes of site delivery in their local area.

Discussions in relation to CLTs ranged from concerns about ‘policing’ of sites to other ‘management’ issues pertaining to the length of time for which a person could leave their pitch and travel without being considered to have given it up; how a CLT member could pass on their pitch to family members or friends if they wished to leave the group, and how and when visitor pitches or transit provision could be used; as well as the financial implications of setting up and servicing a site using the CLT route.

Within this section of the focus group report the various elements of the discussion are considered beneath distinct sub-headings although all under the rubric of community land trusts.

### **Financing of CLTs (Loan repayment and on-going maintenance)**

Whilst participants were generally well disposed to the concept of site delivery via the mechanism of CLTs – preferably as an alternative alongside the re-opening of traditional sites - some concern existed over the practicalities of such programmes for individuals on low incomes or whose earnings fluctuated seasonally. The ability to utilise housing benefit payments to meet the costs of CLTs was regarded as critically important if sites were to be financed through this mechanism.

It also became self-evident that for groups of Travellers to contemplate applying for a CLT grant, clarification of regulations pertaining to loan repayment and on-going ground rent/maintenance charges would be required, alongside a willingness for funders and grant administrators to consider a certain degree of flexibility over terms and conditions.

*“...that’s the other question, if it’s a permanent pitch you should be able to get housing benefit?”*

*“I thought the idea of this community land trust was that they were going to lend us the money to buy the land and we would be able to claim some sort of housing benefit in order to pay that loan back. Once it’s paid back then we would need a very minimal rent to cover the overheads and maintenance”*

Philosophically the group were relatively mixed in their attitude towards repayment periods of loans for the purchase of CLT sites and it would require clear discussion

on terms and conditions and partnership working with groups of Travellers to devise a realistic repayment schedule:

*“The whole idea of it is to overcome chucking money in the bin which is paying rent to someone else to get nothing except safety to sleep that night. The idea is to pay money towards owning something. That is quite attractive – you’ve paid rent and it’s like chucking money in the bin. The idea, you’re community land trust. You know how many people you want to live with and you know how much the land is and how much its going to cost and its just the basic equation or calculation of how much each person owes and then each person decides how much they pay back a week or month, may be someone has some savings and can pay theirs back straight away”.*

*“We have the responsibility of paying it back as soon as possible so that other people can use the money. I think we all want to do it. The idea of getting that loan and paying for the land is something a lot of people want to get into. They want to own it as quickly as possible before there is any chance people change their mind”.*

*“It is a bit like a mortgage, in each town each person has their own mortgage arrangements with the building society, you don’t have to make a law that anyone who buys a house as to pay back this much each week, its up to the individual”.*

### **Rental Charges & Council Tax**

No agreement could be reached over what was a reasonable rental cost as it was acknowledged that not only were earnings often low or fluctuated considerably meaning that savings might be required for the winter months if (for example) people had worked at festivals throughout the summer; but that access to a permanent pitch should act as a passport to top-up housing benefit which could potentially create an artificial market rent:

*“Where do most people get that money to pay the rent?”*

*“But you get housing benefit which covers council tax if people are claiming rent”*

*“Would the housing benefit cover paying off [CLT mortgage/loan charges],”*

*“It depends on who you’re paying it to and what for”.*

*“Depends on how much the housing benefit is”*

### **Maintenance Charges**

There were distinct variations in attitude towards the payment of maintenance charges and it is recommended that should groups form a CLT that this issue is subject to individual terms and conditions agreed by the group:

*"I shouldn't have to pay maintenance when I've paid for my bit of land, but I want to be responsible for my own bit of land. Who would want to go on paying rent when they own a bit of land?"*

*"Well there is things like keeping your hedges up to make sure you're not breaching planning permission or something rather than get everyone saying they need £50"*

*"It could be for a septic tank or resurfacing a driveway"*

*"Or would people want to do that themselves? Would that be a self build thing?"*

*"Aren't the Highways authority responsible for a certain side of the hedge and all the rest of it and keeping the roads clear? So there would be someone flailing the hedges unless you asked them specifically cos you wanted to lay the hedge and apply for a grant to do that".*

*"If I was going to do that, it would be as simple as taking it out of my pocket and putting it in a jam jar on the site. Once I'd borrowed the money and paid it back I wouldn't want to put lay any more money out".*

*"The whole point in keeping it as low impact and sustainable as possible is that there are low overheads. The point of why we live like this is that it doesn't cost much money".*

## **Regulation of Sites/Management**

In the main participants did not find the concept of a tenancy agreement for residents problematic although some concerns existed over the 'policing' or communal enforcement action if someone breached site regulations and if the land was owned by Travellers themselves:

*"I have nothing against tenancy agreements as it guarantees the landowner something and it also guarantees you something. Only thing about it, if you don't like the rules move on. If you get on with the rules then sign on with a tenancy agreement".*

*"[But] How do you enforce it?"*

*"So what happens in this dream world, however we deliver these sites, you've got this land and you're managing it yourselves, that's another thing to look at...who draws up the rules? who enforces it, how does it work?"*

*"The only way it will work is the people who live them agree between themselves and enforce it themselves".*

*"I don't think you could come up with an unreasonable rule. It is fairly level headed and bog standard stuff.. if it was on a bit of paper this is this particular site's rules, all*

*the sites are going to have slight different rules but commonsense. People would say they are OK."*

Some cynicism was expressed that if Travellers were responsible for sites that they would not be able to access support in dealing with 'problematic' tenants or residents:

*"No good having a letter from the council...its going to be like give us our own bit of land and leave us alone".*

Financial issues - whether for the expense of a transit pitch or ensuring a longer-term resident paid back their costs associated with a CLT (or private rented pitch on a Traveller own site) were regarded as likely to be particularly problematic to deal with:

*"Trouble is getting money out of anyone - then you get all that bureaucracy that comes in.... I've been on enough sites over the years where someone got a bit naughty, they were invited to leave fairly rapidly [but] that's not going to be easy if the council is giving you the money [to buy the land] then what's happening?"*

The actual practicalities of obtaining planning permission and the level of amenities required to obtain permission for a private caused some heated discussion and it became evident that for those potential residents who preferred 'low impact' sites local authorities might wish to contemplate flexibility over requirements associated with a suitable site.

*"In order to get planning permission for it to be what it needs to be it will need some hard standing, it will need a gate, safe access and a car park, sewage. Minimal, even if its only a couple of metr3s at the gate I think that will be an important part".*

*"I never get the sewage thing, it's a load of rubbish.... dig a hole in the ground and move on... The healthiest way is to dig a hole and within a week that's gone"*

*"Its like planning [sewage disposal] and is required. You could do compost toilets and they'd probably go for it....I think compost toilets are a bit more mainstream these days"*

To resolve potential disputes and concerns over the minimum requirements for low-impact sites it is recommended that consultation should take place with authorities who are already providing or considering New Traveller facilities (e.g. Norfolk County Council and Dorset County council as well as exploring locations such as Tinkers Bubble in Somerset) as these existing/planned low-impact sites are likely to provide an easily transferable model should this type of site provision be developed in the study area.

### **Use of Vacant Pitches/Duration of Travelling**

This was one of the most contentious elements of the discussion on CLTs as some individuals felt that if they owned a plot of land it should be theirs in perpetuity or be

able to be passed to another family member whilst others felt it should revert to the Trust as a whole. Essentially in the inability for people to agree this would have to be agreed as a contractual term when developing a CLT:

*"If ..one person says they're moving to Spain or somewhere what happens to that pitch? Do they sell it on? Does it pass back to someone else?"*

*"It belongs to the community , the whole piece of land belongs to the community".*

*"But they'd say, I paid x amount back".*

*"I definitely think if someone goes away that's their piece of land. ..I've known things go on in communities when someone's moved on. It's going on at a site round here, someone's moved away but they've got a daughter and links with the area. This lady owns this pitch so they are already thinking about absorbing it or compulsory buying it. I don't think that's fair, if they want to come back its their bit of land".*

*"I think its something that needs to be worked into the constitution"*

*"May be you just go away and no-one else can use it".*

*"A lot of council sites Gypsies can't travel for more than 12 weeks in a year or you lose your place"*

*"I think if you've got a group of people who make the Community Land Trust write into the constitution if I want to go travelling for a year the other people have got to agree [the substitute moving onto the pitch] they can stay. You [also] have to make an arrangement between yourselves where you don't all disappear at the same time leaving the land empty but have the facility to go away and come back".*

Similar debates occurred over mechanisms for arranging a finite sale/transfer of pitches, encouraging the use of 'blue-skies' thinking amongst participants:

*"The idea is that the CLT is a site to hold a site in perpetuity. The members of the CLT can change but the purpose of the land remains the same so everyone pays in so there is going to be an amount, if someone pays in they own that, if their circumstances change someone else can come into it and their buying in will pay out the person moving out. That is a potential working model".*

*"Presumably there is a veto for other members of the site if the other members of the site don't like the new person and feel they won't fit?"*

*"we just need to write it in – I don't know how it would work"*

The provision of transit pitches (both on permanent/CLT sites and utilising traditional Green Lanes is discussed below under 'transit accommodation'.

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## Use of Traditional Stopping Places [enforcement issues]

As has been discussed above, traditional stopping places such as Green Lanes and Drove Roads were regarded as very high on the list of site preferences detailed by participants.

Travellers who had a history of use of Green Lanes were generally familiar with the need to rest land to ensure that it did not become 'bogged' and proposed the following set of rules to ensure full and equal access to the land for both transitory use and those who required or preferred to live year around on traditional stopping places:

*If Green Lanes were 28 days (and we just had that time that everyone knows for years), which we don't get [any more], I know Travellers from different walks of life that still even though they may get away for longer [without being evicted], they mark 28 days on the calendar and they leave of their own accord"*

*"If they are looking at sites in the context of networks, of say a 6 months every 2 year occupancy or a 4 months every 2 year occupancy during that there would be a marked period of 6 months or 4 months it is open for occupation and outside that time it should be fallow".*

*"Yes 'cos in the wetter months a Green Lane can turn into a brown lane".*

*"[fallow periods and 28 day stop as optimum] for ground to recover. ... it's fairly easy to communicate that information to people"*

*"And then outside the cycle if someone desperately needs a place for a fortnight then that would be OK. ....so outside the cycle 4 weeks [maximum halt] but within it 4 months [use within a 2 year period]"*

Following on from discussions on enforcement issues in relation to CLTs it was suggested that if traditional sites were re-opened, self-policing combined with the support of local authority regulations could be used to ensure that care was taken of common resources. In part it was acknowledged that this would require that greater effort was made by all people using the Green Lanes – walkers, riders, Travellers, etc to improve community relations and enhance cohesion:

*"Traditional usage - common regime where a letter of legislation and dog control legislation applies like anywhere else.... We just look at accommodation [provision] as a parking issue"*

*"So say we have somebody comes and calls on this, 'I really need a place and I'm not going'. Who does the enforcement if it's left open to the community?"*

*"Everybody uses the resources, being a horse rider, walker, or Traveller. We all monitor, everybody monitors the resource....so some of that is going to have to [be about] developing better community relations".*

*“With the Green Lanes is there a role for the GLO [Gypsy Liaison Officer] in this, like say if we had someone causing trouble in the community.”*

Considerable debate occurred around the way in which policing of Traveller sites has often appeared to involve ‘collective punishment’ of an entire group when a small number of miscreants are responsible for bad behaviour (see further Cemlyn et. al., 2009) which can in turn lead to tension and a reluctance to engage with ‘the authorities’.

*“That discipline applies to anyone in the community, if a person drops litter in the street, there’s a law to deal with it. You don’t evict a street ‘cos someone drops litter, you prosecute the individual concerned with the legislation that’s specific to address that. You address the individual and the act you don’t indiscriminately punish the group”.*

*“People want to report if an individual is misbehaving badly - really damaging people, [but] the only sanctions police have used so far have been indiscriminate where everyone gets evicted and punished and that’s the constraint on people becoming involved positive with the justice system because the sanctions have been indiscriminate in the past”*

It was proposed however that if Green Lanes were ever to become a collective resource for Travellers again – and were thus to be appreciated in the way in which ‘the right to roam’ has led to enhanced recognition of the value of land – then the Traveller community must take responsibility (in partnership with statutory authorities) in ensuring that the resource is not abused:

Whilst some individuals noted that it could potentially be difficult to deal with people who were breaking the rules, a general willingness to engage with the issue was noted if it was clear that only the ‘rule-breakers’ would be punished if the authorities were asked to take action:

*“There has to be a site respect and everyone on the road knows that. They can’t just turn up and kick off and be out of order because there’s been that self policing within the Travelling community for years and if you have someone causing you problem, you stand there and say yes its you that’s pissing us all off.*

Interesting some cultural differences were noted in relation to New Travellers and other groups in relation to dealing with poor behaviour amongst other residents:

*“That might be an area where it actually is different for New Travellers, Gypsies and Irish Travellers.. cos a lot of Gypsies and Travellers on council sites, they don’t want to self Police....[fear of] intimation and all the rest of it so they want the council to be hard ones managing to deal with the anti social element”.*

*"I do think in a way that whole negative situation has had a kind of positive 'cos we've had to deal with this for a long time so there are ways of dealing with people who are being a pain".*

Whilst acknowledging that it would take considerable political will to reopen traditional halting places we would recommend that consideration be given to this proposal on at least a trial basis of one or two locations combined with a concentrated push on Traveller-sedentary community relations to see if complaints in relation to unauthorised sites diminish as well as monitoring whether the Traveller community are able to successfully self-Police such locations with the support of an experienced Gypsy Liaison Officer.

## **Transit Sites**

Participants were generally unhappy about the proposal for a chain of local authority provided transit site fearing that if these were developed that they would be forced by police or local authorities to move onto such a site regardless of the suitability for their needs, potential cultural or personal clashes with other users, or the location of the nearest site (see further above for discussion by horse-drawn participants). Concerns also were noted in relation to the quality of transit sites and whether appropriate care would be taken of the facility when so many groups and individuals would make use of the site

*"I think people are going to quickly see transit sites as who's on them and people are just going to say we will pull in on your bit and they'll go, no there's another transit site up the road, xxxx site. I'll think who's there, I'm not going there, I'll park on the side of the road and wait for police".*

*"There's a transit site at Hinkley Point and who is looking after this site? Nobody - cos its a transit site. On paper there is a transit site there and [the Local Authority] provide it, but its got warring families on it - people I don't know and don't get on with and probably don't want me there anyway".*

*"And there's .....so many people with different needs and wants, are you going to have a transit pitch for horse drawn and a pitch for vehicles or Gypsies, or what?"*

Transit pitches which were provided as a service to visiting relatives or friends at CLT sites or private rented sites were regarded with more favour (see above) although once again concern existed over how to ensure payment was made for use of a pitch and other associated enforcement issues.

The main and clearly articulated preference for New Traveller transit sites (which also took account of the potential culture clashes with other types of Traveller if 'mainstream' transit sites were used by all groups) was to permit the use of traditional halting places for transitory use as long as basic facilities (e.g. water) were available:



*“Transit accommodation: if you look at a Green Lane as being in a rotational cycle, one green lane is one sixth of a transit site”*

*“It would need to have access to water and things to make it legal for a transit site and be left alone.... you just need to know where water is”*

*“I think to be passed officially as a transit site they would need to have water accessibility... but that’s not necessary if you know of a spring close by then you can always live out of water butts...”*

*“The local [pub] next door ... has a tap outside... nd churches and things like that.... that is traditionally why sites are being parked on because it is easy to get water.”*

*“May be what we can suggest is that on a trial basis perhaps they can open one green lane officially and see how this works. I can’t see them opening up loads ‘cos they’ll say it won’t work”.*

The issue of funding for the provision of transit sites was also touched upon briefly in relation to use of Green Lanes (although more in a theoretical mode than offering a practical solution for collection of rent):

*“Interestingly with stopping places, it [could] be a means in which housing benefit can pay for Green Lanes. That would be interesting”.*

### **Transit pitches on permanent/self-owned sites**

This topic was the subject of considerable debate. Essentially it was agreed that if land is collectively owned that a collective decision would be required over how long an individual could stay on a ‘transit pitch’ and/or whether a land-owner who was away travelling would be able to allow a relative or friend to stay on their plot on a temporary basis. What was self-evident was that participants were clear that transit or temporary pitches should only be allocated to known individuals rather than ‘strangers’ passing through and that clear expectations would have to exist to ensure that the site continued to function appropriately:

*“We were talking about the possibility of letting friends onto our pitch, while one person was off travelling, someone could pull onto that pitch while it wasn’t used but that was more friends than ‘anyone’ just coming in”*

*“we are thinking of having a [separate] transit pitch or two”*

*“Ideally because you are an autonomous group and you’re running yourselves, its not going to be just an open transit pitch, its going to be through the group.... it has to be the responsibility of the group living there, you cannot have someone [just arriving]*

*“And you also need to discuss how long is a transit pitch, is it two weeks, is it a month... 28 days. There should be some sort of time limit set up otherwise it just isn't a transit pitch”.*

*“If people know when they pull on that its a transit pitch, then its like [permanent site residents] coming along every two weeks, and saying what's going on....is everyone happy with it [visiting vehicle] being here, do they [visitor and/or permanent residents] want to say a bit longer.*

Alternatively, one or two individuals who had been involved in fairly in-depth discussions about CLTs proposed an alternative model of mixed transit/residential pitches:

*“We came up with the idea that a pitch is a place enough for your vehicle, may be a run around vehicle and someone to come and visit you. So a pitch includes a space for someone in another vehicle to come and visit you and then you're paying for your pitch but your pitch gives you enough space for that .....you would have the opportunity to visit other people and that would be a private arrangement between you whether it would be a tanner a week [transit/visitor rental] or whether they are a guest”.*

## **Site residence and Impacts on Health**

To enhance our knowledge of New Traveller health issues which is generally fairly under-researched we asked participants if they felt that living (predominantly) on unauthorised sites had led to negative impacts on their physical or mental health. Whilst the duration of participants' travelling history indicates that in the main they were not suffering from any significant disease or illness which would have led to their seeking alternative forms of accommodation (see further Greenfields and Smith, 2010 for a discussion on reasons for moving into 'bricks and mortar accommodation' amongst traditional Gypsies and Travellers which is often associated with ageing and health issues as well as lack of access to stable sites),

In common with 'traditional' Gypsies and Travellers resident on unauthorised sites, New Travellers reported two main areas of difficulty: access to appropriate medical care and ensuring that treatment is not broken as a result of eviction, and experiencing stress and anxiety as a result of the insecurity of their situation.

## **Access to Health Care**

All the participants reported that they were generally in good physical health (although see further below for reference to on-going untreated back problems) everyone reported experiencing difficulties with achieving appropriate medical care on at least one occasion. For New Travellers however, their fairly sophisticated knowledge of the legal right to access a GP, and the relatively easy availability of NHS Direct or walk-in A&E facilities have to some extent mitigated the worst of these problems. For individuals with children or those who were beginning to contemplate their older age, concerns about access to medical care were more pressing and in

one case (with reference to another older Traveller who had been able to move from a vehicle into ‘a massive log cabin’ on an authorised site) explicitly linked to the desirability of secure residence on a site where they could age:

*“One of the things as people get older, its a case of - say I was out on the road 10 years down the road - so say I was in my 60s I might think I was getting lots of aches, I wish it was more comfortable, I wish I could do this... it might be more difficult accessing health, so those sort of issues. ... and it is harder living in caravans than in a house.”*

Other individuals noted the general hardship of living life ‘on the road’ and the way in which a relatively minor illness can become serious if for some reason it is impossible to remain warm and dry:

*“things like that, like health issues - if you have got a problem say the burner has burned through and you’ve fallen on hard times and the like, to be able to keep things going like that for emergencies ..means the difference between getting pneumonia and not”.*

Several women had experienced particular difficulties during pregnancy or when seeking treatment for their young children whilst living at unstable unauthorised sites:

*“A straightforward practicality.. I used to find when we were moving around a lot, with my toddler, if he was ill and you had to phone NHS Direct, they need a postcode. And I still don’t have an address now [residence at tolerated unauthorised site] and that’s always been, its the first thing they need to know. Also if there was an emergency the ambulance only goes by postcode”.*

Typically in such circumstances individuals would resort to necessary subterfuge to ensure access to medical advice

*“I’ve made it up just so that you can talk to somebody over the phone if the little one is ill and it’s that simple”.*

In cases where emergency on-site treatment was required a typical response was to “make it up with the full address” and give precise directions or wait for the ambulance to pass on the way to the site and flag down the crew. Alternatively and in less urgent cases, Travellers would use the address of a settled family member or friend to register with a GP (a tactic which was also common for individuals applying for jobs – see further below under employment).

Two out of the three women present had experienced poor health during their pregnancies and in both cases had found that medical personnel were reluctant to attend on site to deliver treatment (a complaint common to other ‘types’ of Traveller living at unauthorised locations)

*“I was taken into hospital as I ended up have eclampsia and seizures and then got discharged but had to go daily. Well the midwife should have come to me daily for*

*blood pressure checks as I was seriously ill, but they wouldn't come to site because it was too much of a mud pit....so every day I had to get newborn and me 15 minutes down the road to have my blood pressure checked and quite often I'd see a midwife, and they'd say 'why aren't we coming to you? your blood pressure has gone really high, this is too much work, you should just be bed rested', but they wouldn't come to the site".*

*"I've had health visitors not turning up and not coming to the sites through being scared of going on there or turning up and its a bit muddy and they haven't brought any wellies".*

A further (male) participant reported on his experience of calling a doctor to a site when he was seriously ill:

*"I had a doctor - I had pneumonia at the time - did convince a doctor to come out ...e and visit me at site but as soon as he opened the door of [his] vehicle he was quite disgusted by the whole thing and didn't want to examine me and told me that I was probably OK....generally not a very sympathetic attitude".*

The problematic of delivery of health care to mobile or insecurely sited individuals has been a recurrent theme through decades of work with Gypsies and Travellers of all communities. The most effective way of managing care for this group has been found to be the provision of specialist outreach Traveller Health Visitor and health teams (see Cemlyn et. al., 2009) . However, with the emphasis on 'mainstreaming' and cutbacks in provision such services have largely been phased out, despite the recent Department of Health emphasis on improving Gypsy/Traveller healthcare and the Pacesetters Initiatives which focus on these communities. In the absence of a specialist health team in the locality (although potentially a cross-authority inter-disciplinary team could be developed in a relatively cost-efficient manner through utilising mobile services such as those in Herefordshire where Travellers are able to access the Health Bus at a specific location each week) we would recommend that discussion takes place with local primary health care providers to improve cultural awareness training for health staff and advise on the legal and ethical duty (as long as conditions are not unduly hazardous) to attend a patient in need who is resident on a site.

## **Disrupted Medical Care**

In common with other groups of mobile Travellers several individuals reported having problems in continuing health care as a result of eviction, or difficulties in ensuring that their medical records had been forwarded, leading to inappropriate or repetitive treatment:

*"Getting evicted when you're halfway through getting treatment. I was down in Cornwall seeing a physiotherapist and all the rest of it and just getting moved on all the time and can't get back to the doctors.... Try seeing another one [GP] and as you register as a temporary patient all the time nobody takes you seriously just being offered all amount of drugs just to [go away] – they're offering me high dosage*

*valium which doesn't agree with me. I've tried it a couple of times and don't get on with it. They just keep giving me things like that. I'm not going to see them again 'cos they don't take it seriously"*

*"Then you get put on a waiting list to see a specialist and by the time you see a specialist you're 200 miles away trying to see another one"*

*"We could all just echo that"*

## **Mental Health and the Stress of Insecure Sites**

Whilst all participants were at relatively stable locations at present, several referred to the stress and anxiety of having lived at sites where they were likely to experience eviction at short notice, or where they felt that lack of security from passing traffic placed them at risk of vandalism or personal assault:

*"What about mental health? [when you are] never left alone [stress of evictions and dealing with officials]. When you feel beaten sometimes and are absolutely sick of it"*

*"the sort of mental pressure"*

*"I've had to be prepared to face the world whatever it throws at me I've had to stand up against it. If you get vigilante attacks that's quite stressful"*

*"It is a worry 'cos if you go out you've got to lock doors ... there is always someone on the sites but if you are living alone - literally, you've got no [security]"*

*"It's not ideal at all. Not being able to go out when you want...."*

A number of participants made explicit reference to the impact of environmental factors on health, noting that the closure of many traditional sites had led to residence at less than desirable locations which could potentially have a negative effect on their own health and that of other vulnerable Travellers:

*"I've had to stop short term at places where I know I'm going to have health problems if I don't get off it".*

*"This is the problem also, like because the chosen stopping places have been ditched, bouldered ....nowadays we are forced to live for example on abandoned pieces of industrial land, contaminated land. Basically the land we are forced to live on are places that nobody else wants which there is a good reason for that, whereas the places we chose to live on originally suited our purposes and were relatively clean and had water supplies and that is why they became popular in the first place."*

*"I live on an old tip, not officially a tip, but it is a tip and we just quite literally put wood chip and hard core here and there on the top. I'm sure I'm living on contamination".*

*“Because any place that is even considered to be suitable for Travellers is the place that the rest of the population have shunned”*

*“I’ve lived on loads of contaminated places and you just deal with it, cover it up and deal with it as best you can but of course its not an ideal situation. It would be nicer if we choose. Most water supplies are contaminated. ...even when you think they are good, they are bad”.*

Given the commonality of experience in relation to poor site location and contamination, it is to be hoped that the guidance issued by the former administration which emphasised the importance of ensuring that sites are at locations fit for residence will be retained as residential and transit sites are developed. Amongst focus group participants however, a certain degree of cynicism existed as to the likelihood of obtaining planning permission for a site at a desirable location:

*“The main qualifying criteria for Gypsy sites is next to the sewage works and on toxic ground”.*

## **Education**

In response to the question of whether residence on a site had impacted on educational and employment issues, participants reported mixed experiences.

For a number of respondents who were employed in the relatively self-supporting ‘festival circuit’ other than when they experienced eviction, site residence had not been particularly problematic. However, in common with other groups of Travellers, (see further the forthcoming Irish Traveller Movement Britain report, November 2010; Greenfields 2008 and Cemlyn et. al. 2009 for a discussion on employment and training barriers and opportunities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers) being known to live at a site could act as a barrier to accessing training courses or entering into employment in mainstream occupations:

*“It has done - in the fact that I haven’t been able to get a college course but now I’m renting [unofficial private site] I’m doing a course. .... Book-keeping”*

*“Not having an address – when you sign up for a college course”*

*“My daughter wants to pursue a college or university education and what accommodation officers for first year education need to take into account that Travellers have as much right for access to education so would like to see more appreciation and acknowledgement of the needs of Travellers in university colleges and education”*

Some participants were however able to provide examples of their own ability to overcome the difficulties associated with bureaucratic ‘blindness’ towards insecurely sited Travellers, as well as discussing how their friends had overcome the hurdles to entering education or employment:

*“I do know there is a positive side to all this, I do know people that do manage to get to college and work day to day from their park up and have got higher education”*

*“People do their Masters and all the rest of it and Traveller and planning law as well”*

*“Both my sons have been to college”*

*“My mate X gets out of his trailer with his wellies and a suit on and takes his wellies off in the car and puts his smart shoes on and goes off to work at X council”*

A common tactic (see Greenfields, 2008 and the forthcoming ITMB report, 2010) to ensure that being a Traveller does not act as a covert barrier to education or employment is to use the address of a friend or relative when applying for work – a finding noted within studies of other ‘traditional’ Gypsies and Travellers access to employment.

*“When I first moved into a vehicle I was a nurse and I did have to keep it quiet and when I moved to Somerset I used to have a false address to get a job”*

*“One of my friends that wants to do the community land trust is a nurse and she does exactly that, she lives in her vehicle but she doesn’t let on”*

*“My mate is a midwife up the road is training and I imagine she does the same gives a house address in Bristol or something”*

## **Housing**

The final section of the focus group consisted of a short discussion on attitudes towards housing and recent experiences of such forms of accommodation.

No individual reported wishing to live in housing and nobody had made a ‘voluntary’ move into such accommodation. All had attempted the transition had experienced considerable distress in making the move into ‘bricks and mortar’ from living in a vehicle/on a site.

In several cases the move into housing had broken down fairly rapidly and the participant had returned to living on sites (see further, Greenfields and Smith, 2010; Cemlyn et. al., 2009; Shelter, 2008 for further information on the rate of movement out of housing for Gypsies and Travellers who are unable to ‘settle’)

The findings from this section of the focus group support other emerging data which indicates that New Travellers who have been resident in vehicles or who have been ‘horse-drawn’ for a significant period of time find the transition to living in a house as culturally distressing as do ethnic Gypsies and Travellers, a situation which has been recognised in case law as leading to significant psychological distress. Indeed where ‘cultural aversion’ exists to residence in such accommodation, the offer of a house by a local authority has been found by the Court of Appeal to be insufficient reason (on

its own) to dismiss an application for planning permission for a site. See further *Clarke v SSETR [2002] JPL 552* (discussed in Johnson & Willars, 2007)

*"I lived in a house for a year about 3 years ago"*

*"Felt like it was a time bomb basically"* [the stress of living in housing]

*"I can handle a house for 3 days and 3 nights then I'm crawling up the wall"*

The one housed member of the group had indicated clearly that they were only living in such accommodation as a result of lack of sites. Other participants referred to constraints imposed by family or health related pressures.

A theme which emerged strongly for several participants was the court-mandated requirement for residence in a house in relation to family law issues – a topic explored by Greenfields (2002) who found disproportionate use of certain legal orders in family cases (when compared to other communities) and expectations by social workers and lawyers that Travellers would give up their way of life to demonstrate 'stability' in cases pertaining to child residence:

*"My reason for going in a house probably about 6/7 years ago is that I fostered [young person] whose mother had died and social services were quite keen for me to foster X but not if I was in a caravan... so we had to go through this whole rigmarole of getting a large 3 bedroomed house that nobody particularly wanted at the time which we kept for a year...."*

*"my girlfriend was going through court over fighting for her kids because she got forced off the road by her ex partner who was taking her to court so she had to move out of course..... the Court Welfare Officer at the time gave a glowing report on our living conditions and said that the bus was perfectly adequate for the family.... [but] nobody wants to be seen as a Traveller once you are under that amount of scrutiny".*

*"Social workers don't want to be seen to be soft on Travellers that's the other thing which comes back to community relations and how do we actually transform [our image]"*.

When asked to discuss the particular difficulties of living in housing New Travellers responded in virtually identical terms to Gypsies and other 'ethnic' Travellers – referring to discrimination from neighbours, a sense of isolation and being 'different' and a preference for living life 'outdoors' and communally all of which could lead to conflict with neighbours and for housed Travellers trigger depression or stress when forced to adapt their way of life:

*"Neighbours, lack of freedom, claustrophobia"* [reasons for leaving the house as soon as possible]

*"We had our bus completely smashed up...."* [whilst parked outside the house they had moved into for family law related reasons]



*"I think we annoyed everyone really living more in the garden than in the house and having friends over"*

*"If the house was in the middle of the countryside and had a large garden it wouldn't be so bad - but living in the middle of people....."*

The positive aspects of living in a house were detailed as predominantly being access to heating and hot water and freedom from stress of eviction although this was mitigated by the pressures of living in a house (see further Parry et. al. 2004, for discussion on how residence in housing for 'ethnic' Gypsies and Travellers is associated with very poor mental health outcomes despite the relative security of their circumstances).

*"Power is a great thing about your house"* [reference to the participant living in housing currently].

*"Hot water"*

*"I quite like the bath"*

Several individuals noted that the more positive aspects of housing would also be available if they were able to access a secure site with a central communal area:

*"My ideal place would be a barn so you have got that big space, stick an old sofa in there and an open fire in the corner, but basically its an open fronted barn"*

*"That's why I like the idea of that communal space in the middle of the site so you are getting away from each having your own house but you still have access to those kind of facilities like a bathroom or a large cooking space where you can make [food]"*.

Finally (although for focus group participants of lesser importance than the psycho-social aspects of living on sites), the problems associated with re-learning to budget, when prior to moving into housing they had merely had to pay for gas bottles or use an open fire to provide heating, hot water and cooking facilities - were also regarded as a huge disadvantage for people who made the transition into housing – a factor regarded as highly significant in housing breakdown and leading to huge rates of debt amongst 'traditional' Gypsies and Travellers by the charity Shelter (2008):

*"Actually the bills is probably a sensible point and another reason for living like we do"*

*"You're probably just about doing alright - covering the rent that the housing benefit won't pay - sounds like a funny thing, spending your last bit on the giro on the rent just so you struggle and you go into debt.... and then the bills come through and then you remember why you live on the road"*.

## **Conclusion**

The issues and views in the group varied and whilst there was a willingness to engage with ideas like the Community Land Trust (witnessed not just in the focus group, but also in the involvement with Travellers in the Mendip proposals for CLTs) there were still concerns on the details of how such arrangements might work in practice. The CLT proposal has only recently been approved by the district council and it will take some time to see how this idea works – both for the community and for the councils in meeting identified need.

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## **APPENDIX G**

### **FOCUS ON: WOMEN AND HEALTH**

#### **Background**

The focus group was arranged with the assistance of Sally Woodbury who is the health outreach worker for Friends Families and Travellers, based in the South West and facilitated by Margaret Greenfields (BNU). The focus group took place at Frome Community Library as it was understood that this was a convenient location for several local (Romany) participants. In addition, two Irish Traveller women were able to reach Frome with relative ease. The group met on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

It had initially been expected that in the region of eight Romany women would attend from local sites but on the morning of focus group only four arrived and there had apparently been some break-down in communication as two of the potential participants only wished to discuss issues relating to management of public sites in the locality. They were offered the opportunity to remain for the health focus group (as other participants who were only interested in health had by then arrived) and then talk about local site issues, but declined and left.

The core theme of the focus group was family health and the impacts of site provision on well-being and access to health care, with particular reference to specific health needs and service provision for Gypsies and Travellers. Respondents were able to discuss both their own health needs and experiences and that of friends and relatives living in the study area.

Both physical and mental health concerns were discussed within the focus group but no attempt has been made to separate out the 'types' of health condition within the discussion as it became evident (and see further Matthews, 2008 and Parry et. al., 2004) that a complex interplay existed between the psychological well-being of the participants and their families and their accommodation status. Environmental problems associated with poor quality sites were reported as exacerbating a range of health conditions (see below) and in turn anxiety associated with residence in overcrowded and unhealthy accommodation or where fear of eviction existed, appeared to reverberate across many domains of ill-health, increasing the likelihood of depression and anxiety for individuals who were unable to see a way out of the accommodation related difficulties.

#### **Participants and their Accommodation Status**

Three Romany (two from a single family) and two Irish Traveller women (from one family) participated in the focus group

No New Travellers took part in the discussion group but information in relation to the health of participants/experiences of accessing care are included in the focus group undertaken with this section of the Travelling Community.

The women were aged between their 47 and 17 years of age. The two younger women who came with another participant were (respectively) the daughter and daughter-in-law of the woman with whom they attended.

The youngest participant is not yet married, the other young woman was aged 21 and although she is married does not yet have any children. She is currently living with her husband and parent-in-law unlawfully 'doubled up' on an authorised site.

One middle-aged lady (Irish Traveller) has four grown-up sons and a daughter and lives with her extended family on an unauthorised private site.

Of the two Romany Gypsy women who have children; one lives with her husband and two young children on an authorised private site. The other lady (aged 47) is resident on a local authority site with her husband, adult son and daughter-in-law (unofficial residents) and a severely disabled teenager. She has other grown up children living elsewhere in the area.

The young Romany woman currently living with her in-laws noted that

*"we haven't really anywhere to live at all. We're staying wherever we can at the moment. ... [stopping] just about everywhere. We are unable to stay on sites because the council don't allow it. They will allow my partner to stay on the site [because of his health problems] but not myself"*

a situation which her mother-in-law forcibly pointed out was unreasonable as *"of course he's not going to be away from his wife, shouldn't be expected to..."*

Probing indicated that as the young man's parents were already resident on a local authority site and as medical evidence existed in relation to his very poor mental health (depression and anxiety), he was being semi-unofficially allowed to stay with them on the ground that his mother was his carer. Technically his wife was not supposed to remain at the pitch but as a result of site shortages they were unable to access anywhere else to live. As they had not lived in housing and had an aversion to moving to 'bricks and mortar', the young couple remained technically homeless despite the man's health needs.

An additional impact of their insecure accommodation status was the difficulties experienced by the young woman in continuing in her employment. She was locally born and was in the process of undertaking to qualify as a Health Care Assistant, whilst working at a care home. Although she had been able to remain working since her marriage through accessing temporary pitches; 'doubling up' and squatting whilst moving between family sites (all of which provided some basic level of security in contrast to the threat of imminent eviction if they were living at the roadside), she was ironically aware that her employment as a health care assistant would be endangered if they were forced to become nomadic, potentially impacting negatively on the elderly people she worked with, as well as having a negative effect on the family's economic situation (see further ITMB, 2010, forthcoming and Greenfields, 2008)

*“I’m in a regular job at the moment but it all depends on whether we start moving around the road, I’m going to have to give up all my qualifications and basically I’ve worked the last 3 years for nothing”*

In common with interviewees in other focus groups and findings from the survey, respondents in the health focus group all immediately reiterated that employment related discrimination was rife meaning that once a person’s ethnicity was publicly known, or they became nomadic and thus ‘visible’ it became exceptionally difficult for members of their community to obtain paid work:

*“If they know she’s a Gypsy at the care home, they won’t have her there”*

*“So you do use a different address when you’re working or looking for work”*

*“I have to give my address as ‘the mobile home’. I don’t have a postcode because the council won’t recognise me as a proper property” [resident on unauthorised private site].*

Concerns over the ability to seek work or access services (e.g. to have a pizza delivered see further Cemlyn et. al, 2009) and the stress associated with poverty and having to hide one’s identity therefore emerged as a precursor to endemic anxiety and depression within several narratives:

*“That’s like our site - all they know is the Gypsy Camp in Gypsy Lane. As soon as you mention Gypsy Lane, they know where you are, but if you put a postcode - there isn’t one, .... As soon as you say XXXX, they say sorry you’re not coming up. As far as we’re concerned we’re not even on the map”*

### **Accommodation (current) – impact on health**

The woman living on her family owned private site reported that she and her family had been fortunate *“we’ve lived in a bubble, we’ve been lucky”* but through her involvement in health initiatives and GTAAAs she had encountered a high number of Gypsies and Travellers who had experienced discrimination in access to services, being turned away from GP surgeries or who had neglected their health through lack of knowledge, or (in the case of women) cultural issues which had meant that they had not been able to discuss particular health concerns with, or be examined by men (see further below).

The two youngest women were both in generally good health although the young woman whose husband suffered from depression stated that she *“worried about her partner... my partner doesn’t sleep, he lays awake..... [as] he is worried about what is going to happen, is he going to get a pitch... a place to live”*

Both of the more mature women referred to the stress they experienced in their current situation, with particular emphasis laid on their concerns for their family members, a theme which emerged strongly in Richardson, et. al., (2007) where it

was found that Gypsy and Traveller women were particularly likely to neglect their own health whilst taking care of the physical and emotional needs of their spouses, children and (often) grandchildren. Parry et. al. (2004) emphasised that anxiety over accommodation issues was implicated in many cases of depression amongst members of the travelling communities.

*“I am under the psychiatrist. This is the problem I’ve got with my son, he is under the psychiatrist for the same thing [depression and anxiety] because where he is being threatened about he can’t come and live on our site, or get a pitch on our site... its making his illness worse because he’s under a lot of pressure with the council”.*

Thus the planning status of sites (for example whether authorised, unauthorised or resident on road-side locations) was inextricably bound up in the women’s health narratives, and in examples they gave which drew upon the experiences of their friends and relatives.

*“Now my sister has had property for 8 years and each time they’ve turned her down, won’t let her have it [planning permission], won’t give her the licence so she’s now out on the road with her 3 children, so she’s not allowed to live on it, so she’s fighting for that again. .... but that’s all stress for her as well cos like she said, she’s running from town to town, they’re moving her on all the time so the thing is, this is the thing that’s going to happen with these [referring to other focus group participants] if they get chucked out. They’re going to be more of a nuisance to the council so they might as well give them the licence in the first place and allow them to stay on their own land”.*

For the family living on an unauthorised private site, not only were they suffering from stress “nerves” as a result of the constant anxiety about whether they would obtain planning permission “when you try to go to sleep its going through your head all night, like what’s going to happen if we do get put out”, or if they failed to win such permission whether they could afford to find the finances to “put it [the site] back to grazing”

The injunction status of the site meant that facilities were relatively poor at the site although significantly better than those reported at the local authority caravan site. The expense associated with self-provision meant that basic amenities such as electricity were often impossible to afford for less well-off Gypsies and Travellers such as some members of the focus group:

*“[We] don’t have any electricity, its nearly £40 thousand pounds to get electricity on because they want to bring it from miles away. Because of who we are basically, people complain about me all the time. It’s a posh village that I live on the edge of, they’re always complaining about me and I’ve been refused planning about 4 times. I got it once temporarily for 3 years. [Because of] family circumstances - my son died and I moved away [temporarily] I couldn’t stay there - so they took out an injunction and we’re still fighting. We’ve got no shower, we have a toilet but no shower due to the electricity problem. We use a generator. We have complaints about that because of noise [too]”.*

For residents on a local authority site, conditions were particularly problematic as the site was badly maintained and over-crowded. The number of people crowded together in a relatively small place formed an additional source of conflict between residents and the local authority, as unauthorised 'doubling up' was occurring on some pitches where married children who were unable to find an alternative pitch were moving back to live with their parents to avoid being repeatedly evicted or in some cases after having tried living in a flat. When the local authority enforced eviction, not only the young people concerned, but also their parents were likely to experience exacerbated physical and mental health effects:

*"J's father has just had a triple bypass, his mother got bad nerves due to the stress of the husband, he's got something else wrong with him now.... J was evicted off the site two years ago with a 2 week old baby, forced into a flat because he was doubled up on his parent's pitch..... He's now gone back onto the site because he couldn't cope in the flat, he's been threatened [with eviction] on numerous occasions".*

*"They say the site can't cope with the extra residents, but it's like [she] says, its only children that have gone off the site anyway wanting to come back on...."*

The physical condition of some poorly maintained sites are made even worse by the presence of significant numbers of vermin:

*"Our sheds at the moment, we've complained to the council at the moment, its all full of damp, its rotting away, the ceiling is rotting away and the rats have been eating through the ceiling and the electricity so we're getting loads of problems like that. We keep having to get the electric people out because where the rats are trying to eat through the wires, the electric keeps going"*

Discussion ensued as to the impacts of storing medicine at correct temperatures in sheds with intermittent electric supplies and/or vermin. Although none of the women was aware of any specific cases where poor health had been directly linked to the presence of vermin, they identified that on the local public sites a significant number of residents suffered from both poor mental and physical health, noting that 'nerve trouble' and depression were likely to be associated with living in homes which were not fit for purpose, surrounded by a poor quality environment:

*"A lot of the residents on the site are ill so whether they have liquid medication, I'm not sure of that....."*

*"But its the sort of thing with no electric that could be a problem. What about, I know there are illnesses that people can get from rats....."*

*"I don't actually say its due to the rats, some of them are mental illnesses, depression and stuff like that. Like with me, I've got a bone disease, and that's not caused by rats"*

The risk of injury associated with falls on poorly repaired pathways, or where lights did not exist (for example on some public sites and for those at road-side locations) was the subject of considerable debate. Most participants were aware of such problems existing at run-down local authority provision. Indeed the woman who worked as a health advocate had recently had to support an elderly person who had sustained a severe injury at a local authority site:

*"I met a lady up there, who fell down on the concrete, she's 76 years old and the concrete and the slab, each pitch is sectioned and where its never been maintained is uneven, she fell up there and she told the liaison officer and the officer went, 'oh well sorry'. That was it. She [elderly lady] has actually broken her arm"*

*"On the camp in Frome, they won't allow street lamps, elderly people have fallen over and broke arms, legs but they won't allow [provide] street lamps"*

In addition to the high rate of anxiety and depression amongst respondents (two of five participants) the close-knit nature of Gypsy and Traveller families meant that difficulties experienced by a family member had impacts on other kin. All participants reported experiencing significant levels of worry about the wellbeing of immediate family members (e.g. sister; partner; child; brother/sister) associated with the relative's insecure accommodation:

*"Its like X, I'm worried about this depression, I think if he was here with us I could keep a close eye on him - as a family unit"*

*"I have an 18 year old disabled boy. He has got severe learning difficulties and there's a lot of stress for him because [brother currently living on site 'illegally'] is company for him, and they're very close. ....he knows when X isn't there, he senses things.... so that's another stress of moving people on. It affects the nerves and things of people with learning disabilities"*

Physical health problems were reported by both of the mature female participants, in one case, the lady suffers from extremely poor physical health in addition to receiving medication for her anxiety and depression:

*"I have bone disease and I will end up in a wheelchair...."* Adding that when she does become dependent upon a wheelchair she will have to leave the site as the damaged flagstones and poor facilities meant that it would be impossible for her to remain living at home as she became increasingly disabled, circumstances reported by Cemlyn et. al., 2009 as leading many older, or disabled, Gypsies and Travellers to move into housing with resultant negative impacts on their mental health.

The other woman who as head of her household is responsible for supporting the emotional wellbeing of her extended family (see further Richardson, et al, 2007) noted that *"I've got diabetes....my daughter [teenage participant in focus group] is bordering on diabetes, she's had loads of tests and has got another appointment soon. I've got a son with asthma too"*



The findings in relation to health status amongst the sample (and comments pertaining to high rates of diabetes and cardio-vascular problems amongst local Gypsies and Travellers, particularly those resident on local authority sites) are broadly in line with the findings from a range of GTAA evidence which are indicative of the health inequalities experienced by members of these populations manifested in part by lower life expectancy and increased rates of morbidity (Matthews, 2008; Parry et. al., 2004)

### **Ease of Access to Health Care at present location and when travelling**

All participants in the focus group were registered with a GP at present. Considerable discussion took place however on the problematic of accessing appropriate care and treatment when travelling or insecurely sited. The only person who had not experienced significantly disrupted health care or problems registering with a GP was the lady residing on her family owned private site. Through her work as a health advocate she had however amassed considerable knowledge of the problems facing Gypsies and Travellers across the West Country in terms of achieving health parity and access to care:

Participants drew upon their own experiences to discuss how an unsited Gypsy or Traveller would typically engage with health services when 'on the road'. The problem of lack of continuity of care and GPs knowledge of what tests (if any) had been undertaken were noted as impacting on the quality of care which would be received in relation to on-going conditions:

*"You only go to the doctor if you're very ill and can't manage. You have to be very sick and have to be an emergency to go to the doctor as you wouldn't have any red cards [health notes] with you. You might see Dr Brown today and Dr Black tomorrow, they don't know anything about you...."*

*"I suppose you would have to go to the walk in centres now and there wouldn't be a proper record or history on you".*

*"It's better to have a set location where you have your own doctor, your own surgery, where they know you, so if you're ill they know everything about you"*

Delays in obtaining appointments where a family were at risk of imminent eviction, or lack of a clear record of prior medical treatment (or even notes referring to whether someone was taking medication which should not be 'mixed' with other drugs) were all identified as hazards of intermittent access to medical care for 'roadside' families:

*"you have problems trying to get into one but they wouldn't know anything about you and you might have to move the next day and if you felt a little bit better you wouldn't probably bother about going back. .... It can cause long term damage. Its like you, you've got a normal doctor so he knows you, they've got your records but for us, they don't they have no record. We could just say to them, I've got a brain tumour, they just have to take our word for it".*

A preferred alternative for those with family members who had access to secure accommodation was to use them to provide a 'care of' address and register with a known and trusted GP at that location. However in times in emergency the distance (and the problems in obtaining a convenient appointment at a GP) could prove difficult. The young married woman noted that:

*"Last year when I've been ill I've had to run back to my home doctor who is in Dorset.... It's a good half hour - 45 minutes drive"*

None of the participants had been able to access preventative care for themselves or their families whilst highly mobile or living at roadside sites although awareness existed of the presence of outreach Traveller health workers in some areas.

Considerable discussion occurred on the cultural aspects of preventative screening (e.g. smear tests) and inoculations for children. Participants were clear that certain services were not generally regarded as suitable for Travellers and Gypsies (see further below under cultural awareness). Although the lady who worked as a health advocate was a strong supporter of inoculations, noting that often 'word of mouth' concerns about the perceived link between autism and 'fits' led families to reject such preventative care, other participants regarded childhood immunisation with some suspicion.

One of the mature women noted that:

*"the health visitors kept coming to see me and kept saying about how he must have these injections. In the end I let him have one of these injections and he had convulsion fits.... I wouldn't let the others have any more then"*

### **Contact with Health Service Providers (Good and Bad Practice)**

Participants were asked to consider how accessible they found current medical services – and whether they were able to provide examples of good practice in their locality.

The absence of a dedicated Traveller health service was noted with regret and also the loss (through redundancy or retirement) of experienced personnel who had both cultural knowledge and experience (perhaps developed over many years) of working with Gypsy and Traveller communities. Staff coming from such a background (e.g. specialist health visitors), not only can provide care such as advice on urgent medical conditions, but are potentially able to act as a conduit of information, and assist with accessing a range of services for community members as well as acting to educate their colleagues on Gypsy and Traveller cultures.

The mainstreaming of a range of specialist health provision means that dedicated staff have become few and far between, although emerging Gypsy/Traveller health initiatives such as the Department of Health pacesetters programme, and those which employ advocates who are lay members of the travelling community, are going some way towards filling the lacuna in culturally appropriate advice and

information, albeit without being able to offer front-line health services to nomadic families:

*“It used to be very good in [South Somerset?] about 7 years ago because the health visitor would come to you and she give the children all their injections. She was very good.. but that don’t happen anymore”.*

Although personal experience had varied, almost all of those present (and in particular the lady employed as a health advocate) has knowledge of Gypsies and Travellers experiencing poor quality treatment or experiencing discrimination in access to services, which they associated with their ethnicity and/or lack of knowledge about cultural practice. In common with New Traveller interviewees, the participants reported that attempting to obtain ‘on site’ treatment could be especially problematic, relating to the unwillingness of health personnel to attend at a location which does not have a clear post-code or which is difficult to access – the very places in fact where many Gypsy and Traveller sites are located:

*“Difficult for ambulances as they’re all on sat navs now and they won’t give me a postcode.... [resident of private unauthorised site] I use a postcode but its not recognised by the computer even though its fine for the postman. If an ambulance tries to find my place they have to keep phone contact because they can’t find us because they’re using sat navs. So I have to keep on the phone with them... if there was a drop out of the signal that would be it...”*

*“Can I tell an incident. Weston site [local authority owned] is a bit rural behind a sort of industrial estate, and its got a pallet yard in front of it and there’s only one access .....there is no sign for it, the site. You have to go through these 100ft high pallets to get to it and there’s all little roads darting off so unless you’ve been there several times you wouldn’t know how to get into the site. X when she went into labour, they had to go out, say about a quarter of a mile to get out to the road to stand out there to wait for the ambulance because the ambulance didn’t know where it was ‘cos there wasn’t a sign for it.... no signs up to say the site is there ‘cos we’re right down a back lane. Like you say, no postcode again. So that again, is a council impacting on people’s health by just those basic things”.*

Conflicts over whether health staff are acting in a racist manner, or if genuine misunderstandings have occurred because community members are unaware of – perhaps because of literacy problems – best practice guidance, also have the potential at times to escalate suspicion and cause conflict in relation to health service access, with accusations and assumptions being made by both ‘sides’:

*“when swine flu was out and about [a health worker called the health advocate], and she said .....”we’ve had an incident in Bridgwater, don’t know which surgery, Irish Travellers, she said..... well they though the little girl had swine flu, she had a fever and thought it was ..she said they’d been into the surgery, the whole family, with this little child in their arms, which I would do myself and she said, they’ve had to close down the whole surgery to disinfect it. She said the surgery has now been closed down for half a day and has caused problems. I said ‘do they [the surgery] normally*

*do that sort of thing?’ She said ‘it’s not because they’re Travellers, it’s because its swine flu’. I said ‘was it swine flu?’ ‘Oh I’m not too sure about that but obviously had to take precautions’. But it would be because they were Travellers. You do have things like this going on....”*

Accordingly the role of community health advocates or specialist health staff are important in restoring trust in services or in communicating what is required of both health professionals and Gypsies and Travellers in a local area.

## **Environmental issues and impacts on health**

As discussed above under ‘current accommodation’, the environmental conditions on some sites were identified by participants as potentially being responsible for exacerbating pre-existing conditions, or increasing the risk of becoming depressed.

Whilst New Travellers (see other focus group reports) explicitly identified residence on contaminated sites as a factor in ill health the ‘traditional’ Gypsies and Travellers taking part in the current focus group were less likely to refer to environmental factors in this way, (perhaps because of the lower likelihood of travelling and longer-term residence at sites) identifying instead that on some sites, particularly those which are local authority owned, damp, cold, badly insulated ‘sheds’ and ageing trailers are implicated in significant levels of poor health.

Residents who are jobless or on low wages and unable to afford the costs of electricity re-charged by their landlord were identified as being particularly at risk of developing respiratory or related conditions. In a number of cases listed by participants, residents were unaware of their legal rights or scared of seeking assistance from social services departments, although health advocates and community workers were able to act as ‘bridges’ to services in a number of cases:

*“There is a woman on the [local authority site], a Romany Gypsy, she’s got terminal cancer, she’s got 3 children under the age of 4, she’s got a little static home which isn’t that good.... she hasn’t got much movement. In the winter time she’s got her family, sister and mother to help with the children, but in the winter time there is no heating or anything. They’ve got little blow heaters... the electric is hot, but they can’t afford put the heaters on out there to even bath the children”*

*“J about 70 is in there [on that site] on her own, I asked if she ever used the toilet in the winter, she said she can’t because the bathroom is freezing, there’s no heating or insulation at all - so that causes problems in itself especially when there are people with bad health”.*

*“[X called the health advocate to say] ‘I’ve got a boy with autism, the back fence had a big hole in it’ which led to a field so we asked [site manager] could she replace the fence because it was dangerous for the child, the social services wrote a letter and rang them and said could they sort the fence out, ‘no we can’t.. we’ve got to waste the money on picking up all the rubbish that’s chucked away on the site, we can’t afford to do that’..... in this case the advocate was able to act as a liaison person*

negotiating between the social services department, the environmental health team and the site manager and family in an attempt to find a solution which would minimise the danger to the child and reduce the stress experienced by the mother.

### **Women's health - awareness of services, conditions etc**

The women taking part in the focus group were realistic about the impacts on their health of supporting their families and taking a prominent role in engaging with public services (see further Clark & Greenfields, 2006; Cemlyn et. al., 2009; Richardson, et. al. 2007) for discussion on gendered roles amongst Gypsies and 'traditional' Travellers) *"and stress isn't going to help with that either"*

The sense of responsibility to their families means that it was reported that some women (particularly those who are the oldest female of their generation) are unlikely to take time to seek health advice or if they had concerns *"didn't want to worry the family"*

*"my aunt down on a private gypsy site....she is 70 odd she's had breast cancer and its now come back, she was talking to my mam the other day, 'I've found another lump', she [the speaker's mother] said 'who have you told'? She'd told no-one, she got 3 daughters, 'I don't want to worry them' .....This is their attitude... but in the trailer she [aunt] said she wasn't going to tell them ..because they've got families and lives to lead. This is the way they [older women] think".*

Participants identified that in addition to the stress associated with much of modern life, changing lifestyles i were also likely to have had an negative effect on women's physical health and well-being. Some participants made reference to an increased tendency for women to drive rather than walk (explicitly linked to the increase in traffic on roads and the physical location of many Gypsy sites in out of the way locations).

*"Its not safe to walk in the roads now"*

*"I suppose the women years ago were very active"*

*"My gran lived till she was nearly 90 she died 5 years ago and if she was walking up a road and you said you would pick her up and take her to the shops, she would say no thank you I'll walk. That's what kept her going so many years".*

A discussion on access to health information for women (particularly with reference to preventative screening in relation to gynaecological cancers and other conditions) led to the conclusion that whilst changing cultural issues (and perhaps an increased rate of literacy) means that younger women are more likely to be aware of the necessity for particular types of health screening, older women were still unlikely to avail themselves of the service or regard it as unnecessary unless they are supported by family members who encourage them to engage with health services:.

*"I think younger women are [taking notice of health information], like our age, but the older women aren't - they are so old fashioned in their ways".*

*"Two of the women on the site, one of them came over to me, ....'my girl can you read this letter to me cos they said I got to go to the hospital and have this big screening thing done on my breasts' I said 'don't worry about it, its cos you're over 70 whatever, they want you to have this done, its a new thing that's come out'. She went up and she was alright, my mother in law went up and she was alright but E she went up and they were just starting to grow, they found it and they said we caught you in time'.*

*"I think the only ones that can change that is the children - talking to their families - cos they [older people] won't change a lot".*

Gender issues in access to screening/health care (and see further under 'cultural awareness')

One theme which emerged from the discussions (replicating findings from Richardson, et. al., 2007) was the importance of awareness of gender and culture in engaging with women on health matters. Whilst the move towards the development of more 'community health advocates' was broadly welcomed on the grounds that women from the Gypsy and Traveller community would be able to disseminate information in a culturally appropriate manner, it was recognised that some women would find it extremely difficult to access information or support if they have an 'embarrassing' condition or gendered taboos meant that it would not be possible to ask for assistance or advice from male relative or medical staff:

*"I think its alright for elderly women that have got daughters that can read and explain it to them but someone who has all boys, they won't understand...."*

All participants were clear that Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller culture meant that *"some women's issues ....[wouldn't] go and talk to a man doctor,"* even if meant waiting a considerable period of time to see a woman doctor. Even for fairly mild health issues women reported that just in case they required a physical examination they be willing to wait for an appointment *"Put it this way, I want to see my own doctor, her name is Dr X and I made the appointment 2 weeks ago now and I get to see her Monday....."*

*"What a lot of Traveller women will do if they've got a doctor, they will [only] ask for a woman doctor"*

Where women required hospital treatment this could prove particularly problematic as it was rare to be offered a choice of seeing a female medic.

One participant also discussed the embarrassment and distress which could occur when medical staff were unaware of Gypsy and Traveller cultures, in this case forbidding sexual activity prior to marriage:

*"I didn't get married until I was nearly 30 and when I used to go to the doctor I had a woman doctor and I remember going when there was a locum there.....I could die, I was there about flu or something stupid, it was a general thing and I thought I didn't mind seeing him but they have the computer and I'm about 27 at the time and he went, 'I notice on the screen, we've sent you - several doctors recommending you to have a smear test. It's very important you have it done' and I'm sat there and my face went red. I'm thinking 'how am I going to answer the question?' and he sat there saying 'is there a reason?' I said 'I don't do that sort of thing, I don't need it'. He was as embarrassed afterwards when I explained it to him [that] I'm a Gypsy and our culture is we don't talk about things like that. He was understanding, and he said he would 'make sure you don't get any more letters', but at the time I could have literally cried"*

*"Don't know about you girls, but when I used to go to the doctors at 16/17 or whatever, my doctor was a lady doctor and would say, "are you wanting contraception?" It was [as] embarrassing for me from a lady so if it was a man. I could have died there and then"*

*"Most of the time they don't believe in sex before marriage and therefore they don't need contraception"*

Participants were clear on the need for greater awareness of their cultural practices, noting that: *"like you said about the Muslim lady - if a Pakistani lady went to the doctor, if the doctor said are you sexually active [and she was unmarried] it would be an insult"*.

*"When I was having my eldest boy, the male doctor came in, and I said to my mum I'm not having this child until he goes out the room and she said to him 'if you don't go out and don't send a woman in here she'll never have this baby'. I said 'I'm sorry I'm not having this baby when you're in here.' [Even though] he said 'I know more about your body than you do'.*

### **Men's health – prevalence of conditions; supporting men to access services; cultural barriers, etc.**

In common with findings from a range of studies (see further Cemlyn, et. al., 2009 and Matthews, 2008; Parry et. al., 2004), participants in the women's health group identified that Gypsy and Traveller men were particularly difficult to engage in preventative health care, or, because of cultural attitudes to masculinities found it hard to acknowledge poor health.

When asked to consider the most common health problems experienced by their male relatives the women identified stress and depression

*"Men won't [seek help] because it is shameful for them so they don't talk about it"*

*"he also suffers with migraines but migraines are usually stress but he would say there's nothing wrong with me, because he was too proud to say"*

which were often related to anxiety over accommodation and employment; . Anxiety and stress were identified by women as manifesting in high rates of cardio-vascular illness *“that could be coming out in heart disease they reckon”*; bronchitis and other respiratory conditions related to high rates of male smoking (see further Parry et. al., 2004)

Whilst men were recognised by all women as being difficult to influence in terms of health care, Gypsy and Traveller males were regarded as particularly stubborn as recognition of physical weakness was not regarded as a cultural trait. Participants stated that the only way to encourage male relatives to seek health advice was to covertly encourage healthy eating and lifestyle changes or to resort to

*“nagging and nagging for months”*

*“My son had got Novo virus and had diarrhoea for over a week, he wouldn’t even phone the doctor, I had to do that to find out the symptoms from the nurse...*

*“My brother won’t go to the doctor.... He wouldn’t go, he’s lost weight, he’s lost a lot in a week.”*

When attempting to identify methods which would encourage Gypsy and Traveller men to access either treatment or preventative screening a general consensus existed amongst participants that : *“it takes a scare to do it”* with several women making remarks to the effect that: *“it’s not like you’ve got any influence to look after their health”*.

The role of peer support and tailored, personalised screening was however acknowledged as having some influence on encouraging male take-up of preventative services, as was the ability to access opportunistic health care:

*“my mother’s brother he worked for Royal Mail and the Royal Mail put this big thing on about testing ‘down below’ [testicular cancer]. He had nothing at all wrong with him [of that type] and he was perfectly healthy but he went and had the blood test and he was in the late stages of serious cancer. Then me dad had it done the blood test cos he realised because of that I’m a man 60 odd ...and he want and had the test. So I think the only way they will do it is if something happens in the family or a friend”*

*“That’s how ignorant men are, it takes something that serious before they make them go to the doctor”*

*“If your husband was ill would you get him to do anything?”... “No”*

One particularly effective male health screening campaign which took place two years ago at Appleby Fair had attracted attention amongst many Gypsies and Travellers and was commended by participants as a model for encouraging men to look after their health:



*“If at the fairs and things there was a health thing that did blood pressure and testers for that thing down there and didn’t broadcast with posters outside saying blood test is for down there, if they could just go in and there was a little leaflet saying that you can have anything done here today, discreetly, I think some - not all - would go. They’re not putting themselves out, they’re there, its not like they have to drive down and have a day off work. I think that’s how they would have certain things done. I don’t know if they send packs out to do the tests [at home] but I think there are big problems [with Gypsy and Traveller male health] and they [men] won’t look after themselves”.*

**Recommendation:** That a preventative health screening programme should be developed across Somerset and the study region utilising opportunities to access Male Gypsies and Travellers through the provision of a drop-in ‘discreet’ screening and advice provision at Priddy Fair and other local gatherings. The relatively low cost of taking such a mobile unit to a fair is likely to be off-set in terms of savings in long-term health care for individuals who become seriously ill and are not ‘picked up’ until they are experiencing significant rates of morbidity or premature mortality.

### **Cultural Awareness of Gypsy/Traveller issues (health care providers)**

Although discussions on cultural awareness were to some extent embedded within a number of topics considered within the focus group, on several occasions participants raised the issue of particular examples of poor practice or misunderstanding by health, social care and other public sector officials which acted as a barrier to engagement. The examples given below are typical of the types of ‘casual racism’ or cultural misunderstandings which act as a barrier to service use and which lead to a climate of anxiety or anger when dealing with professionals.

*“My friend was told that because it was their own land and couldn’t get planning permission, they had 14 days, though she was pregnant they had 14 days to get off or they would have a visit. She had a baby in the new big Swindon Hospital and she had a bad time and said to the nurse, midwife or whoever, ‘could I stay in here a couple of days longer ‘cos I’ve got to go back to a site and I’ve got to go outside for water and a bath and everything and I’m not in a good state’, ‘that’s alright [said the health professional] ‘you’re used to it, that’s the life you lead’”.*

*“Receptionists for example make it difficult to get through. Yesterday I was talking to someone .....someone she knows... spent about 20 minutes trying to explain what her life was before she could actually get to her medical problem because the doctor just went ‘what do you do for water’ and she just wanted to talk [about her medical concerns], after getting her nerve up to talk about it”.*

*“Me being a big woman I have trouble getting out of the bath [now she is disabled] but because she’s a carer [daughter-in-law], she understands how to lift me in and out, she knows how, because sometimes I lock and I can’t move my body, now X [professional] said ‘why can’t your husband do it for you?’ I said ‘we don’t believe in our husband’s washing our private bits we don’t like it. I said ‘I don’t have any*

*daughters and she's my daughter in law and she does it for me'. She said 'I think that's a load of rubbish. She said 'your husband is your husband and he's been with you 27 years' I said 'I don't care how long, I don't want him washing me down below'. These gorje [non Gypsy/Traveller] people don't understand how Gypsies are. We don't like things like that".*

Cultural issues relating to the importance of having family members attending to offer support at times of transition (e.g. when someone is dying in hospital, or at the time of a birth) have been reported in a number of research programmes as offering a particular point of conflict with professional health staff who are unfamiliar with cultural requirements and are also constrained by meeting the needs of other service users (Parry et.al., 2004; Cemlyn et.al. 2009; Matthews, 2008). A combination of increased mutual understanding of the pressures and expectations facing both service users and service providers and the utilisation of liaison skills possessed by community health advocates or recognised community contact points can go a long way to defusing tense situations which can lead to bad feeling and the stereotyping of both Gypsies and Travellers and 'racist' health care providers:

*"Another problem - this is what you get. Most Travellers unless you live on a council site, people don't know they are Travellers so often when they go in to have a baby they don't have it on their record they are a Gypsy. The only time you tends to be able to tell is when all the family starts heading in...."*

*"Granny....she was a very old lady and in Redditch Hospital and Marie said 'the people are treating us bad up here, keep saying you can't visit'. She said 'there is a lot of us visiting - but we are trying to behave ourselves' she said 'when I kept bringing in a flask for Granny, for a cup of tea, she said the nurse came over and said 'we do know how to make a cup of tea you know' and she was going on and on" so [community advocate] rang the ward and asked to speak to the sister. ....I spoke to her very professionally.."*

Participants recognised the value of cultural awareness training and appreciated the changes which they had identified; noting that even something as simple as a GP recognising that *"if they give you a 9.00am appointment and you have 6 children to feed and dress [it is difficult to be on time] . .. whereas [later] they could be at school"*

*"So that makes it a lot harder to get things sometimes, 'cos of timing of appointments".*

The increased awareness of Gypsy and Traveller literacy problems also meant that *"doctors and nurses [are] using phone calls now to remind you because if you don't get letters and people don't read and write [appointments are missed]"*

*"I do think things are changing now they are starting to train the staff on the culture of Travellers... but then again... you've got so many different sorts [of communities] now .....so its very confusing for them as well"*

Indeed several respondents noted that because of their physical similarities to other indigenous peoples, Gypsies and Travellers were often regarded as a 'hidden' population, and thus failed to achieve awareness of their specific needs and cultures:

*"The problem is with Gypsies, you don't look no different than a white British person outside that door, but when a Pakistani goes in they are a different colour or a Chinese person is different they can see it,.....if I have to go into somewhere and write [ethnic monitoring form] Black or White, English, British, White Irish, or other, I never put 'Gypsy', so how would they know.. if Travellers don't put it down what they are?"*

**Recommendation:** We would strongly urge that the simplest way of overcoming such difficulties is to provide (compulsory) high quality cultural awareness training for front line staff. Such training and a range of information sources are provided by a number of charities and voluntary sector Traveller and Gypsy support agencies, with training programmes delivered in the vast majority of cases by experienced Gypsy and Traveller community members. The requirement that staff attend such a session or at the very least receive information on Gypsy and Traveller cultural practices would appear a cost-effective and 'equalities aware' practice, given that 91% of local authorities report having members of the travelling community residing in or passing through their locality, and 13% of authorities state that Gypsies and Travellers are the largest minority group in their area (CRE, 2006:24)

Clearly defined information sources and access to well respected and networked community health advocates or liaison officers embedded within local areas, will also assist in minimising cultural difficulties which act as a barrier to good community relations and take-up of services.

## **Relationships with neighbours – well-being**

Respondents were predominantly living with family members on sites. For comments relating to relationships with neighbours in housing (and with regard to common pre-conceptions about Travellers living on sites (and casually racist comments) see further below:

## **Experiences of living in housing**

The mature Romany Gypsy woman and the younger Gypsy 'health advocate' had both lived in housing at various points in their life.

In one case the family made the transition into housing as they believed that such a form of accommodation would improve the health of their children:

*"All 3 of my children were asthmatic and I was myself, and the conditions we were living in ... at that time we were living in a lane, there was no toilets, bathroom or anything, so we had no choice but to go into a house but it was mainly because of health issues.... but when they [the opportunity arose of a pitch on a local authority*

*site] and there was better accommodation with running water and bathrooms, we wanted to go back to our own people”.*

For this family who were initially re-housed in a run-down housing estate, both the impact of sudden separation from their culture and family support network, and the experience of racism and living next door to a substance abuser coalesced to lead to significant depression and anxiety until they were able to move back to a site:

*“I had environmental health out because the guy next door was a drug addict, me youngest child was 3 at the time, and he was chucking the used needles over the garden so I had to have the council people out. ... We was going shopping and coming home and [found graffiti had been painted] all along the walls of the side of the house, ‘Dirty Filthy Gypsies, we don’t want you here’. So there was a lot of abuse when living with Gorje [non Gypsy] people so we moved out and back on the site.... it was hard at first [to find a pitch] but luckily for us, my husband’s aunt is disabled and moved into a bungalow so we had her pitch”*

The other family had moved into housing because: *“I married a [non-Traveller] so I thought living in a house would be like ‘Neighbours’ and ‘EastEnders’ and everybody was like Travellers and they would all go to the pub together at the end of the road and they would all have BBQs and parties because that’s what they do in Coronation Street, Neighbours and that... so I thought ‘its not going to be bad and I’m going to have this lovely house and its going to be handsome and I’m going to get on with everybody’. I don’t mind who I talk to. And when I went there I had this lovely house, I didn’t have any racism but I always tell people what I am and you always get the sarcastic jokey comments, ‘oh pack your things up she’s a Gypsy and all that... I’m only joking’. But you were in this house: Travellers didn’t tend to visit me any more cos I married a gorje so I ....stopped mixing for a while.. nobody visited me apart from one of my first cousins,... so I sort of lost my identity and then you’d go literally 3 months and you might just say good morning to someone outside, because they lived their own lives, never spoke to each other.*

*I didn’t want people in my house, but you didn’t visit people and it got to the stage when I had the children and post natal depression kicked in but I think that exacerbated it. I said to [husband], ‘I’m leaving you I can’t live like this’, I went back to my mum’s land...she had her land passed. I got a trailer we went on there and straight away the depression went”*

In neither case had the women been able to deal with the significant stresses associated with making a transition to such types of accommodation, resulting in psycho-social trauma of the type recognised as fulfilling the criteria for ‘cultural aversion’ to ‘bricks and mortar’ (Shelter, 2008; Cemlyn et.,al, 2009; Parry et. al., 2004).

*“It drove me up the wall.....”*

One young Romany woman noted that: *“I was born in one [house]. I lived there until I was about 8 and I lived next door to my uncle but our neighbours weren’t very nice*

*- used to look down their nose at us. When I turned eight my mother and father bought a piece of land in Dorset not far from where we lived in a house and we lived in a mobile home for about 10 years...my parents got planning permission... it took quite a while to settle in cos we used to get grief from the village because we lived on the outskirts of a posh village and they used to look down their nose and used to say we 'caused all this trouble', which we didn't. we kept ourselves to ourselves but now I think they've accepted us and don't get involved with us any more".*

A general consensus of opinion greeted the remark that *"some Travellers like houses, some get on very well but the majority of those I know hate it... the only ones that do like it have the money to buy a place out in the country and can have the children and trailers and have got the people around them".*

### **Bereavement – services and support**

The topic of bereavement services and the accessibility and appropriateness of services for Gypsies and Travellers was touched upon briefly, drawing upon findings in both Greenfields (2008) and Parry et. al. (2004) which indicated that given the close knit nature of the communities; large family size; high rate of child deaths and the incontrovertible evidence on premature morbidity and mortality across all age ranges; members of these communities were likely to experience disproportionate impacts of bereavement related grief, whilst being unlikely to make use of mainstream support services such as the Childhood Bereavement Trust; CRUSE, etc.

The participants were generally uneasy speaking about this topic *"you'd have a load of crying women on your hands"* [if the subject was spoken of for long] or noting that:

*"I think the problem with that sort of thing, we deal with things in our own way and if you had someone coming in telling you how you should be and what you should be doing, you would end up getting narked with them and telling them to go"*

The importance of holding large scale funerals where *"People will come from hundreds of miles"* were valued as providing *"support from your own family"* although it was agreed that *"long term... it seems to take a long time to get over it."*

Cultural differences between Gypsies and Travellers and sedentary neighbours in relation to funerals were underlined by the following interchange:

*"I don't know about you but I found it quite shocking that my husband who is a gorje... and I know all gorje ain't like that... has never been to his grandparents grave and my husband knew them and he's never been there, but yesterday with my parents and uncle went to my great great Gran's and we cleaned it...didn't even know them, we cleaned the grave and its a thing with Travellers the way they deal with it themselves and its just like the sitting up with people [community gathering to show respect the night before a funeral] its all part of the process."*

The value of family support and culturally aware grieving and mourning rituals (which could themselves lead to distressing conflict with settled neighbours or public authorities if they were unaware that a large gathering would occur for a funeral) were reiterated by all participants.

However, the general discomfort and distress about speaking about death could also lead to situations where an individual was left feeling isolated once the initial mourning period had passed. For women who were living away from their family (often residing in housing) the situation could be even more isolating, triggering significant bouts of depression which remained untreated (and see further Richardson, et. al., 2007)

*“X another relation of mine, a lot older than me, about my parents age, she lived in one of the council houses at the end and X lost a 17 year old son in a car accident, she said ‘hundreds of people come to my boy’s funeral but now they walk across the road rather than speak to me’.... She used to come and confide in me but in the same time its different if you’re on a site..... its worse for women in a house, if you’re on a site its ‘good morning come and have a cup of tea’, if they can see a women upset”.*

*“It’s better for people on sites than not on sites”*

*“Sometimes one of them come in for something and I’ve been sitting there crying they’ll sit there for 2-3 hours with you”.*

The topic of unresolved grief and how best to support women (in particular) who had experienced the premature death of a child was regarded as particularly problematic:

*“I came across ... had family members kill themselves because they’ve never got over grief of someone dying”*

*“X was on the verge of doing that but she had a younger daughter, and says if it wasn’t for little Y ‘I would have topped myself’ and it was only because she had a younger child”.*

*“It’s like Z when J died. Z was in a terrible way because she would go the cemetery twice a day, every day, the flowers were unbelievable. I think that’s 7 years ago and she’s still like it today and that’s the way she deals with it”*

The question of whether Gypsy and Traveller families might be interested in accessing specialist services such as those provided by the The Child Bereavement Trust, or the concept of training Gypsy and Traveller women as bereavement support workers was regarded with great ambivalence:

*“I think its a wonderful idea [but] I couldn’t do it because I would break down”*

*“When I do my speeches for the [health project] as soon as I mention the word child, about anything, like when I’m talking about roadside children, I start talking about*

*children say 'children have nowhere to live', because I have 2 little children myself the word child [I start to cry], I couldn't do that [bereavement support]. I would say you would find it very difficult to find Traveller women to do that".*

## Other

Although the focus group covered most areas of health as core topics, it was noted by two participants in passing that a problem exists amongst some Gypsies and Travellers in relation to the sharing of medication on the grounds that if a tablet or liquid medication is effective for one individual with a particular condition then it should help someone else with a similar health problem. In part it is believed that this sharing of medicine relates to concerns over having to wait for appointments, deal with lack of cultural awareness and hurdles to accessing treatment, or simply the inconvenience of having find time to attend at a surgery. This finding supports other anecdotal evidence emerging from recent health reports and research into the role of community health practitioners (Greenfields, 2008; Matthews, 2009)

Information about the dangers of such practices can potentially be disseminated through the auspices of trained community health advocates, working in partnership with culturally aware medical staff.

*"Big problems with older travellers and tablets.... They know what they got to take but if I had got arthritis, really got an ache in the leg, [then they are likely to] share the pills. That happens so often. 'Have a bit of this for your gout... this is good'".*

*"And nerve pills [anti-depressants], people sharing those can be really bad".*

Literacy issues emerged in several places within the focus group as a barrier to effective engagement with services. Significant findings across a number of domains of inequalities (Cemlyn, et. al., 2009) have identified the ways in which poor literacy skills can impact on Gypsies and Travellers; and health knowledge and compliance with treatment are similarly affected by this issue. The stigma of being unable to read, or the embarrassment (and potentially cultural taboos) associated with asking a younger person or someone of the opposite sex to read a personal letter from a Dr or hospital could act as major disincentive to seeking appropriate advice and support:

*"Someone was talking to me about diets, I think it was diabetes or something, and what they could and couldn't eat because their mother in law couldn't read so she was saying you buy this sort of tin, and so not knowing what she was getting and getting things that was bad for her"*

Whilst participants were generally agreed that in the sense of physical health, access to treatment is now easier to access than in the past, they considered that the stresses of their lives had increased dramatically in recent years leading to poorer mental health for their community at large. Essentially however, they reported that:

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*“the main step of getting healthcare...its not a problem if you have somewhere to live. Basically the top and bottom [of the problem] is if you have a fixed abode and address then you have no problems at all”.*